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H. DE BALZAC

THE COMÉDIE HUMAINE



*"DON'T SAY TOO MUCH ABOUT HER, MY DEAR FRIEND, OR
YOU WILL SPOIL IT ALL."*



H. DE BALZAC

MUSE OF THE DEPARTMENT
AND LES EMPLOYÉS

TRANSLATED BY

JAMES WARING

WITH A PREFACE BY

GEORGE SAINTSBURY



PHILADELPHIA

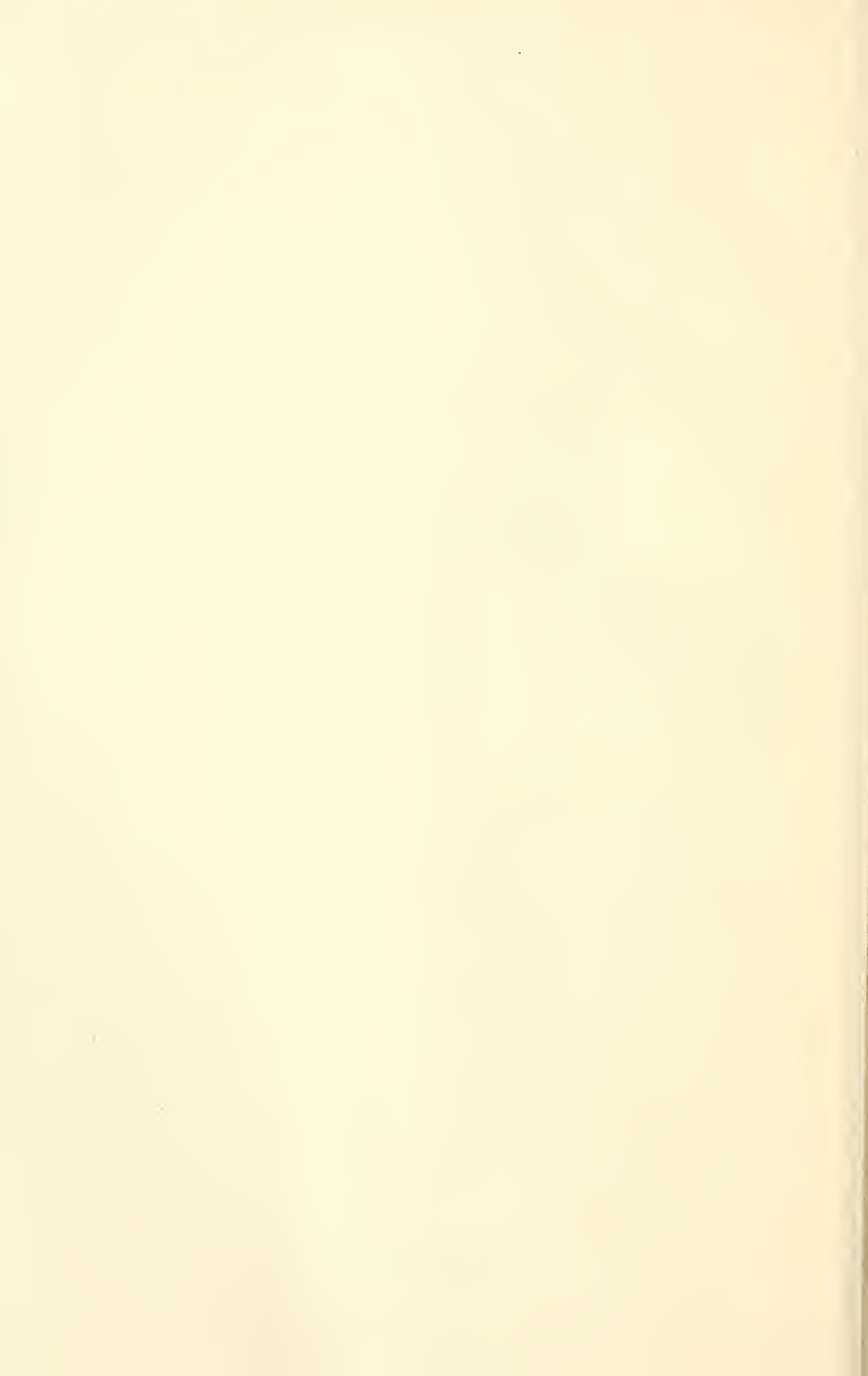
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Drawn by J. Ayton Symington.



PREFACE.

ALTHOUGH "La Muse du Département" is a most important work, it cannot perhaps be spoken of in unhesitating terms. It contains indeed, in the personage of Lousteau, one of the very most elaborate of Balzac's portraits of a particular type of men of letters. The original is said to have been Jules Janin, who is somewhat disadvantageously contrasted here and elsewhere with Claud Vignon, said on the same rather vague authority to be Gustave Planche. Both Janin and Planche are now too much forgotten, but in both more or less (and in Lousteau very much "more") Balzac certainly cannot be said to have dealt mildly with his *bête noire*, the critical temperament. Lousteau, indeed, though not precisely a scoundrel, is both a rascal and a cad. Even Balzac seems a little shocked at his *lettre de faire part* in reference to his mistress' child; and it is seldom possible to discern in any of his proceedings the most remote approximation to the conduct of a gentleman. But, then, as we have seen, and shall see, Balzac's standard for the conduct of his actual gentlemen was by no means fantastically exquisite or discouragingly high, and in the case of his Bohemians it was accommodating to the utmost degree. He seems to despise Lousteau, but rather for his insouciance and neglect of his opportunities of making himself a position than for anything else.

I have often felt disposed to ask those who would assert Balzac's absolute infallibility as a gynæcologist to give me a reasoned criticism of the heroine of this novel. I do not entirely "figure to myself" Dinah de La Baudraye. It is perfectly possible that she should have loved a "sweep" like Lousteau; there is certainly nothing extremely unusual in a woman loving worse sweeps even than he. But would she

have done it, and having done it, have also done what she did afterward? These questions may be answered differently; I do not answer them in the negative myself, but I cannot give them an affirmative answer with the conviction which I should like to show.

Among the minor characters, the *substitut* de Chagny has a touch of nobility which contrasts happily enough with Lous-teau's unworthiness. Bianchon is as good as usual: Balzac always gives Bianchon a favorable part. Madame Piédefer is one of the numerous instances in which the unfortunate class of mothers-in-law atones for what are supposed to be its crimes against the human race; and old La Baudraye, not so hopelessly repulsive in a French as he would be in an English novel, is a shrewd old rascal enough.

But I cannot think the scene of the Parisians *blaguë* the Sancerrois a very happy one. That it is in exceedingly bad taste might not matter so very much; Balzac would reply, and justly, that he had not intended to represent it as anything else. That the fun is not very funny may be a matter of definition and appreciation. But what scarcely admits of denial or discussion is that it is tyrannously too long. The citations of "Olympia" are pushed beyond measure, beyond what is comic, almost beyond the license of farce; and the comments, which remind one rather of the heavy jesting on critics in "Un Prince de la Bohême" and the short-lived "Revue Parisienne," are labored to the last degree. The part of Nathan, too, is difficult to appreciate exactly, and altogether the book does not seem to me a *réussite*.

"The Muse of the Department" has a rather complicated record. It appeared at first, not quite complete and under the title of "Dinah Piédefer," in "Le Messenger" during March and April 1843, and was almost immediately published as a book, with works of other writers, under the general title of "Les Mystères de Province," and accompanied by some other work of its own author's. It had four parts and

fifty-two chapters in "Le Messenger," an arrangement which was but slightly altered in the volume form. M. de Lovenjoul gives some curious indications of mosaic work in it, and some fragments which do not now appear in the text.

As is the wont of Balzac's collections of mixed stories (with the possible exception of the wonderful volume which opens with "La Recherche de l'Absolu"), and as is naturally very often the case with collections of short stories in general, the volume which originally began with "La Maison Nucingen"* is a little unequal. One of its contents, "Sarrasine," though powerful in its way, is tarred with the same brush of morbidity which stains "Une Passion dans le Désert" and "La Fille aux Yeux d'Or."

The other contents were a little miscellaneous, and were very variously grouped in Balzac's successive rearrangements of the Comédie. Indeed, in the so-called *édition définitive* the minor stories are separated from "La Maison Nucingen," while an earlier arrangement still was different again.

The long piece entitled "Les Employés," which fills more than half the entire volume, and nearly two-thirds of it without "Sarrasine," has rather dubious claims to be called a novel or a story at all. Balzac, either from the fact of his father having been employed in the civil department of the army, or because he had been destined himself by kind family friends to the *rond-de-cuir* (the office-stool), or because he was a typical Frenchman—for while half the French nation sits on these stools, the other half divides its time between laughing at them and envying them—was always exceedingly intent on the ways and manners of government offices. One of the least immature scenes of his *Œuvres de Jeunesse*, the opening passage of "Argow le Pirate," concerns the subject. The collection of his *Œuvres Diverses*, only of late years opened to the explorer who has less than libraries at his command,

* Included in the volume "The Seamy Side of History" in this edition.

contains repeated returns to it, of which the "*Physiologie de L'Employé*" was the best known and most popular; and the novels proper are full of dealings with it. In this particular piece, indeed, Balzac has actually incorporated something from his earlier "*Physiologie*," and has thus made it even less of a story than it was when it first appeared under the title of "*La Femme Supérieure*." In that condition it was divided into three parts—"Entre deux Femmes," "*Les Bureaux*," and "*A qui la place*." The later shape, with the additions just referred to, tended to overweight the middle part still more at the expense of the two ends; and as it stands, it is little more than a criticism, partly in argument, partly in dialogue, of administration and administrative methods, with a certain slight personal interest at both ends.

"*Les Employés*" is an older book than many, being originally dated July 1836. It also appeared in the "*Presse*" just a year after its composition, but was then called "*La Femme Supérieure*," which name it kept on its publication by Werdet as a book in 1838. It was here enlarged, and had "*La Torpille*" (the first title of "*Esther*" or "*Comment aiment les Filles*") and "*La Maison Nucingen*" for companions. There were, as usual, chapter divisions and titles. At its first appearance in the *Comédie* the actual title and "*La Femme Supérieure*" were given as alternatives, but later "*Les Employés*" displaced the other.

G. S.

THE MUSE OF THE DEPARTMENT.

To Monsieur le Comte Ferdinand de Gramont.

My dear Ferdinand:—If the chances of the world of literature—habent sua fata libelli—should allow these lines to be an enduring record, that will still be but a trifle in return for the trouble you have taken—you, the Hozier, the Chérin, the King-at-Arms of these Studies of Life; you, to whom the Navarreins, Cadignans, Langeais, Blamont-Chauvrys, Chaulieus, Arthez, Esgrignons, Mortsauks, Valois—the hundred great names that form the aristocracy of the “Human Comedy” owe their lordly mottoes and ingenious armorial bearings. Indeed, “the Armorial of the Études, devised by Ferdinand de Gramont, gentleman,” is a complete Manual of French Heraldry, in which nothing is forgotten, not even the arms of the Empire, and I shall preserve it as a monument of friendship and of Benedictine patience. What profound knowledge of the old feudal spirit is to be seen in the motto of the Bauséants, Pulchrè, sedens, melius agens; in that of the Espards, Des partem leonis; in that of the Vandenesses, Ne se vend. And what elegance in the thousand details of the learned symbolism which will always show how far accuracy has been carried in my work, to which you, the poet, have contributed.

Your old friend,

DE BALZAC.

ON the skirts of Le Berry stands a town which, watered by the Loire, infallibly attracts the traveler's eye. Sancerre

crowns the topmost height of a chain of hills, the last of the range that gives variety to the Nivernais. The Loire floods the flats at the foot of these slopes, leaving a yellow alluvium that is extremely fertile, except in those places where it has deluged them with sand and destroyed them forever, by one of those terrible risings which are also incidental to the Vistula—the Loire of the northern coast.

The hill on which the houses of Sancerre are grouped is so far from the river that the little river-port of Saint-Thibault thrives on the life of Sancerre. There wine is shipped and oak staves are landed, with all the produce brought from the upper and lower Loire. At the period when this story begins the suspension bridges at Cosne and Saint-Thibault were already built. Travelers from Paris to Sancerre by the Southern road were no longer ferried across the river from Cosne to Saint-Thibault; and this of itself is enough to show that the great cross-shuffle of 1830 was a thing of the past, for the House of Orleans has always had a care for substantial improvements, though somewhat after the fashion of a husband who makes his wife presents out of her marriage-portion.

Excepting that part of Sancerre which occupies the little plateau, the streets are more or less steep, and the town is surrounded by slopes known as the Great Ramparts, a name which shows that they are the high-roads of the place.

Outside the ramparts lies a belt of vineyards. Wine forms the chief industry and the most important trade of the country, which yields several vintages of high-class wine full of aroma, and so nearly resembling the wines of Burgundy, that the vulgar palate is deceived. So Sancerre finds in the wine-shops of Paris the quick market indispensable for liquor that will not keep for more than seven or eight years. Below the town lie a few villages, Fontenoy and Saint-Satur, almost suburbs, reminding us by their situation of the smiling vineyards about Neuchâtel in Switzerland.

The town still bears much of its ancient aspect; the streets

are narrow and paved with cobbles carted up from the Loire. Some old houses are to be seen there. The citadel, a relic of military power and feudal times, stood one of the most terrible sieges of our religious wars, when French Calvinists far outdid the ferocious Cameronians of Walter Scott's tales.

The town of Sancerre, rich in its greater past, but widowed now of its military importance, is doomed to an even less glorious future, for the course of trade lies on the right bank of the Loire. The sketch here given shows that Sancerre will be left more and more lonely in spite of the two bridges connecting it with Cosne.

Sancerre, the pride of the left bank, numbers three thousand five hundred inhabitants at most, while at Cosne there are now more than six thousand. Within half a century the part played by these two towns standing opposite each other has been reversed. The advantage of situation, however, remains with the historic town, whence the view on every side is perfectly enchanting, where the air is deliciously pure, the vegetation splendid, and the residents, in harmony with nature, are friendly souls, good fellows, and devoid of Puritanism, though two-thirds of the population are Calvinists. Under such conditions, though there are the usual disadvantages of life in a small town, and each one lives under the officious eye which makes private life almost a public concern, on the other hand, the spirit of township—a sort of patriotism, which cannot indeed take the place of a love of home—flourishes triumphantly.

Thus the town of Sancerre is exceedingly proud of having given birth to one of the glories of modern medicine, Horace Bianchon, and to an author of secondary rank, Étienne Lous-teau, one of our most successful journalists. The district included under the municipality of Sancerre, distressed at finding itself practically ruled by seven or eight large landowners, the wire-pullers of the elections, tried to shake off the electoral yoke of a creed which had reduced it to a rotten borough.

This little conspiracy, plotted by a handful of men whose vanity was provoked, failed through the jealousy which the elevation of one of them, as the inevitable result, roused in the breasts of the others. This result showed the radical defect of the scheme, and the remedy then suggested was to rally round a champion at the next election, in the person of one of the two men who so gloriously represented Sancerre in Paris circles.

This idea was extraordinarily advanced for the provinces, for since 1830 the nomination of parochial dignitaries has increased so greatly that real statesmen are becoming rare indeed in the lower chamber.

In point of fact, this plan, of very doubtful outcome, was hatched in the brain of the Superior Woman of the borough, *dux femina fasti*, but with a view to personal interest. This idea was so widely rooted in this lady's past life, and so entirely comprehended her future prospects, that it can scarcely be understood without some sketch of her antecedent career.

Sancerre at that time could boast of a Superior Woman, long misprized indeed, but now, about 1836, enjoying a pretty extensive local reputation. This, too, was the period at which the two Sancerrois in Paris were attaining, each in his own line, to the highest degree of glory for one, and of fashion for the other. Étienne Lousteau, a writer in reviews, signed his name to contributions to a paper that had eight thousand subscribers; and Bianchon, already chief physician to a hospital, officer of the Legion of Honor, and member of the Academy of Sciences, had just been made a professor.

If it were not that the word would to many readers seem to imply a degree of blame, it might be said that George Sand created *Sandism*, so true is it that, morally speaking, all good has a reverse of evil. This leprosy of sentimentality has spoilt many women, who, but for her pretensions to genius, would have been charming. Still, *Sandism* has its good side, in that

the woman attacked by it bases her assumption of superiority on feelings scorned ; she is a blue-stocking of sentiment ; and she is rather less of a bore, love to some extent neutralizing literature. The most conspicuous result of George Sand's celebrity was to elicit the fact that France has a perfectly enormous number of superior women, who have, however, till now been so generous as to leave the field to the Maréchal de Saxe's granddaughter.

The Superior Woman of Sancerre lived at La Baudraye, a town-house and country-house in one, within ten minutes of the town, and in the village, or, if you will, the suburb of Saint-Satur. The La Baudrayes of the present day have, as is frequently the case, thrust themselves in, and are but a substitute for those La Baudrayes whose name, glorious in the Crusades, figured in the chief events of the history of Le Berry.

The story must be told.

In the time of Louis XIV. a certain sheriff named Milaud, whose forefathers had been furious Calvinists, was converted at the time of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes. To encourage this movement in one of the strongholds of Calvinism, the King gave the said Milaud a good appointment in the " Waters and Forests," granted him arms and the title of Sieur (or Lord) de La Baudraye, with the fief of the old and genuine La Baudrayes. The descendants of the famous Captain La Baudraye fell, sad to say, into one of the snares laid for heretics by the new decrees, and were hanged—an unworthy deed of the great King's.

Under Louis XV. Milaud de La Baudraye, from being a mere squire, was made chevalier, and had influence enough to obtain for his son an ensign's commission in the Musketeers. This officer perished at Fontenoy, leaving a child, to whom King Louis XVI. subsequently granted the privileges, by patent, of a farmer-general, in remembrance of his father's death on the field of battle.

This financier, a fashionable wit, great at charades, capping

verses, and posies to Chlora, lived in society, was a hanger-on to the Duke of Nivernais, and fancied himself obliged to follow the nobility into exile; but he took care to carry his money with him. Thus the rich émigré was able to assist more than one family of high rank.

In 1800, tired of hoping, and perhaps tired of lending, he returned to Sancerre, bought back La Baudraye out of a feeling of vanity and imaginary pride, quite intelligible in a sheriff's grandson, though under the consulate his prospects were but slender; all the more so, indeed, because the ex-farmer-general had small hopes of his heir's perpetuating the new race of La Baudraye.

Jean-Athanase-Polydore Milaud de La Baudraye, his only son, more than delicate from his birth, was very evidently the child of a man whose constitution had early been exhausted by the excesses in which rich men indulge, who then marry at the first stage of premature old age, and thus bring degeneracy into the highest circles of society. During the years of the emigration Madame de La Baudraye, a girl of no fortune, chosen for her noble birth, had patiently reared this sallow, sickly boy, for whom she had the devoted love mothers feel for such changeling creatures. Her death—she was a Casteran de la Tour—contributed to bring about Monsieur de La Baudraye's return to France.

This Lucullus of the Milauds, when he died, left his son the fief, stripped indeed of its fines and dues, but graced with the weathercocks bearing his coat-of-arms, a thousand louis-d'or—in 1802 a considerable sum of money—and certain receipts for claims on very distinguished émigrés inclosed in a pocket-book full of verses, with this inscription on the wrapper: Vanity of vanities, all is vanity.

Young La Baudraye did not die, but he owed his life to habits of monastic strictness; to the economy of action which Fontenelle preached as the religion of the invalid; and, above all, to the air of Sancerre and the influence of its fine elevation,

whence a panorama of the valley of the Loire may be seen extending for forty leagues.

From 1802 to 1815 young La Baudraye added several plots to his vineyards, and devoted himself to the culture of the vine. The Restoration seemed to him at first so insecure that he dared not go to Paris to claim his debts ; but after Napoleon's death he tried to turn his father's collection of autographs into money, though not understanding the deep philosophy which had thus mixed up I O U's and copies of verses. But the vinegrower lost so much time in impressing his identity on the Duke of Navarreins "and others," as he phrased it, that he came back to Sancerre, to his beloved vintage, without having obtained anything but offers of service.

The Restoration had raised the nobility to such a degree of lustre as made La Baudraye wish to justify his ambitions by having an heir. This happy result of matrimony he considered doubtful, or he would not so long have postponed the step ; however, finding himself still above ground in 1823, at the age of forty-three, a length of years which no doctor, astrologer, or midwife would have dared to promise him, he hoped to earn the reward of his sober life. And yet his choice showed such a lack of prudence in regard to his frail constitution, that the malicious wit of a country town could not help thinking it must be the result of some deep calculation.

Just at this time his eminence, Monseigneur the Archbishop of Bourges, had converted to the Catholic faith a young person, the daughter of one of the citizen families, who were the first upholders of Calvinism, and who, thanks to their obscurity or to some compromise with heaven, had escaped from the persecutions under Louis XIV. The Piédefers—a name that was obviously one of the quaint nicknames assumed by the champions of the Reformation—had set up as highly respectable cloth merchants. But in the reign of Louis XIV., Abraham Piédefer fell into difficulties, and at his death in 1786 left his two children in extreme poverty. One of them, Tobie

Piédefer, went out to the Indies, leaving the pittance they had inherited to his elder brother. During the Revolution Moïse Piédefer bought up the nationalized land, pulled down abbeys and churches with all the zeal of his ancestors, oddly enough, and married a Catholic, the only daughter of a member of the Convention who had perished on the scaffold. This ambitious Piédefer died in 1819, leaving his wife a fortune impaired by agricultural speculation, and a little girl of remarkable beauty. This child, brought up in the Calvinist faith, was named Dinah, in accordance with the custom in use among the sect of taking their Christian names from the Bible, so as to have nothing in common with the saints of the Roman church.

Mademoiselle Dinah Piédefer was placed by her mother in one of the best schools in Bourges, that kept by the Demoiselles Chamarolles, and was soon as highly distinguished for the qualities of her mind as for her beauty; but she found herself snubbed by girls of birth and fortune, destined by-and-by to play a greater part in the world than a mere plebeian, the daughter of a mother who was dependent on the settlement of Piédefer's estate. Dinah, having raised herself for the moment above her companions, now aimed at remaining on a level with them for the rest of her life. She determined, therefore, to renounce Calvinism, in the hope that the cardinal would extend his favor to his proselyte and interest himself in her prospects. You may from this judge of Mademoiselle Dinah's superiority, since at the age of seventeen she was a convert solely from ambition.

The archbishop, possessed with the idea that Dinah Piédefer would adorn society; was anxious to see her married. But every family to whom the prelate made advances took fright at a damsel gifted with the looks of a princess, who was reputed the cleverest of Mademoiselle Chamarolles' pupils, and who, at the somewhat theatrical ceremonial of prize-giving, always took a leading part. A thousand crowns a year, which was as much as she could hope for from the estate of La Hautoy

when divided between the mother and daughter, would be a mere trifle in comparison with the expenses into which a husband would be led by the personal advantages of so brilliant a creature.

As soon as all these facts came to the ears of little Polydore de La Baudraye—for they were the talk of every circle in the Department of the Cher—he went to Bourges just when Madame Piédefer, a devotee at high services, had almost made up her own mind and her daughter's to take the first comer with well-lined pockets—the first *chien coiffé* (handsome-faced dog), as they say in Le Berry. And if the cardinal was delighted to receive Monsieur de La Baudraye, Monsieur de La Baudraye was even better pleased to receive a wife from the hands of the cardinal. The little gentleman only demanded of his eminence a formal promise to support his claims with the president of the Council to enable him to recover his debts from the Duc de Navarreins “and others” by a lien on their indemnities. This method, however, seemed to the able minister then occupying the Pavillon Marsan rather too sharp practice, and he gave the vine-owner to understand that his business should be attended to all in good time.

It is easy to imagine the excitement produced in the Sancerre district by the news of Monsieur de La Baudraye's imprudent marriage.

“It is quite intelligible,” said Président Boirouge; “the little man was very much startled, as I am told, at hearing that handsome young Milaud, the attorney-general's deputy at Nevers, say to Monsieur de Clagny as they were looking at the turrets of La Baudraye: ‘That will be mine some day.’ ‘But,’ says Clagny, ‘he may marry and have children.’ ‘Impossible!’ So you may imagine how such a changeling as little La Baudraye must hate that colossal Milaud.”

There was at Nevers a plebeian branch of the Milauds, which had grown so rich in the cutlery trade that the present representative of that branch had been brought up to the civil

service, in which he had enjoyed the patronage of Marchangy, now dead.

It will be as well to eliminate from this story, in which moral developments play the principal part, the baser material interests which alone occupied Monsieur de La Baudraye, by briefly relating the results of his negotiations in Paris. This will also throw light on certain mysterious phenomena of contemporary history, and the underground difficulties in matters of politics which hampered the Ministry at the time of the Restoration.

The promises of ministers were so illusory that Monsieur de La Baudraye determined on going to Paris at the time when the cardinal's presence was required there by the sitting of the Chambers.

This is how the Duc de Navarreins, the principal debtor as yet threatened by Monsieur de La Baudraye, got out of the scrape:

The country gentleman, lodging at the Hôtel de Mayence, Rue Saint-Honoré, near the Place Vendôme, one morning received a visit from a confidential agent of the Ministry, who was an expert in "winding up" business. This elegant personage, who stepped out of an elegant cab, and was dressed in the most elegant style, was requested to walk up to No. 37—that is to say, to the fourth floor, to a small room where he found his provincial concocting a cup of coffee over his bedroom fire.

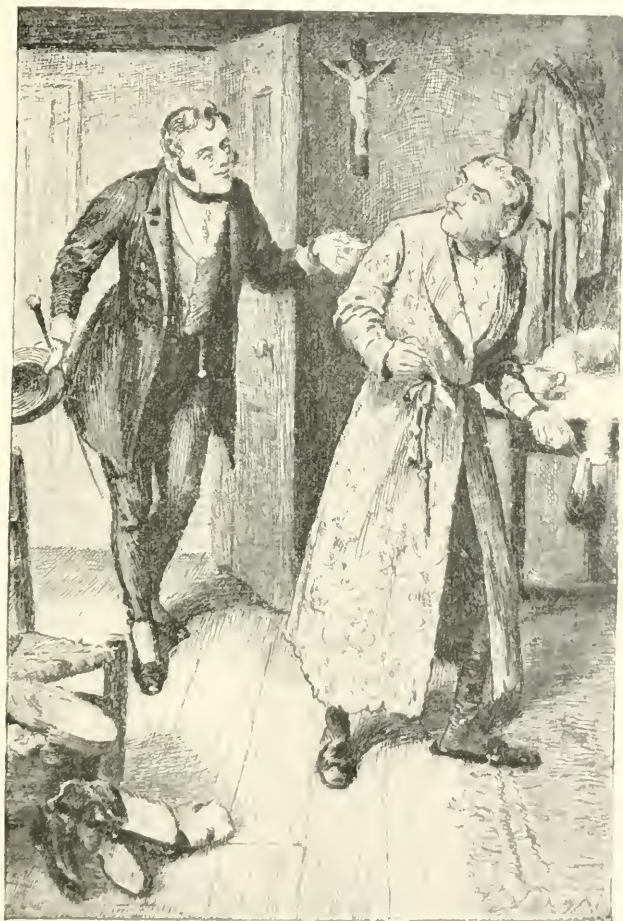
"Is it to Monsieur Milaud de La Baudraye that I have the honor——?"

"Yes," said the little man, draping himself in his dressing-gown.

After examining this garment, the illicit offspring of an old Chinese wrapper of Madame Piédefier's and a gown of the late lamented Madame de La Baudraye, the emissary considered the man, the dressing-gown, and the little stove on which the



"IS IT TO MONSIEUR MILAUD DE LA BAUDRAYE THAT I
HAVE THE HONOR—?"





milk was boiling in a tin saucepan as so homogeneous and characteristic that he deemed it needless to beat about the bush.

"I will lay a wager, monsieur," said he audaciously, "that you dine for forty sous at Hurbain's in the Palais Royal."

"Pray, why?"

"Oh, I know you, having seen you there," replied the Parisian with perfect gravity. "All the princes' creditors dine there. You know that you recover scarcely ten per cent. on debts from these fine gentlemen. I would not give you five per cent. on a debt to be recovered from the estate of the late Duc d'Orléans—nor even," he added in a low voice—"from MONSIEUR."

"So you have come to buy up the bills?" said La Baudraye, thinking himself very clever.

"Buy them!" said his visitor. "Why, what do you take me for? I am Monsieur des Lupeaulx, master of appeals, secretary-general to the Ministry, and I have come to propose an arrangement."

"What is that?"

"Of course, monsieur, you know the position of your debtor——"

"Of my debtors——"

"Well, monsieur, you understand the position of your debtors; they stand high in the King's good graces, but they have no money, and are obliged to make a good show. Again, you know the difficulties of the political situation. The aristocracy has to be rehabilitated in the face of a very strong force of the third estate. The King's idea—and France does him scant justice—is to create a peerage as a national institution analogous to the English peerage. To realize this grand idea, we need years—and millions—the obligations of rank. The Duc de Navarreins, who is, as you know, first gentleman of the bedchamber to the King, does not repudiate his debt; but he cannot—— Now, be reasonable. Consider the

state of politics. We are emerging from the pit of Revolution. And you yourself are noble. He simply cannot pay——”

“Monsieur——”

“You are hasty,” said des Lupeaulx. “Listen. He cannot pay in money. Well, then; you, a clever man, can take payment in favors—Royal or Ministerial.”

“What! When in 1793 my father put down one hundred thousand——”

“My dear sir, recrimination is useless. Listen to a simple statement in political arithmetic: The collectorship at Sancerre is vacant; a certain paymaster-general of the forces has a claim on it, but he has no chance of getting it; you have the chance—and no claim. You will get the place. You will hold it for three months, you will then resign, and Monsieur Gravier will give twenty thousand francs for it. In addition, the order of the Legion of Honor will be conferred on you.”

“Well, that is something,” said the vine-grower, tempted by the money rather than by the red ribbon.

“But then,” said des Lupeaulx, “you must show your gratitude to his excellency by restoring to Monseigneur the Duke of Navarreins all your claims on him.”

La Baudraye returned to Sancerre as collector of taxes. Six months later he was superseded by Monsieur Gravier, regarded as one of the most agreeable financiers who had served under the Empire, and who was of course presented by Monsieur de La Baudraye to his wife.

As soon as he was released from his functions, Monsieur de La Baudraye returned to Paris to come to an understanding with some other debtors. This time he was made a referendary under the great seal, baron, and officer of the Legion of Honor. He sold the appointment as referendary; and then the Baron de La Baudraye called on his last remaining debtors, and reappeared at Sancerre as master of appeals, with an appointment as royal commissioner to a commercial association established in the Nivernais, at a salary of six thousand francs,

an absolute sinecure. So the worthy La Baudraye, who was supposed to have committed a financial blunder, had, in fact, done very good business in the choice of a wife.

Thanks to sordid economy and an indemnity paid him for the estate belonging to his father, nationalized and sold in 1793, by the year 1827 the little man could realize the dream of his whole life. By paying four hundred thousand francs down, and binding himself to further installments, which compelled him to live for six years on the air as it came, to use his own expression, he was able to purchase the estate of Anzy on the banks of the Loire, about two leagues above Sancerre, and its magnificent castle built by Philibert de l'Orme, the admiration of every connoisseur, and for five centuries the property of the Uxelles family. At last he was one of the great landowners of the province! It is not absolutely certain that the satisfaction of knowing that an entail had been created, by letters-patent dated back to December, 1820, including the estates of Anzy, of La Baudraye, and of La Hautoy, was any compensation to Dinah on finding herself reduced to unconfessed penuriousness till 1835.

This sketch of the financial policy of the first Baron de La Baudraye explains the man completely. Those who are familiar with the manias of country-folk will recognize in him the *land-hunger* which becomes such a consuming passion to the exclusion of every other; a sort of avarice displayed in the sight of the sun, which often leads to ruin by a want of balance between the interest on mortgages and the products of the soil. Those who, from 1802 till 1827, had merely laughed at the little man as they saw him trotting to Saint-Thibault and attending to his business, like a merchant living on his vineyards, found the answer to the riddle when the ant-lion seized his prey, after waiting for the day when the extravagance of the Duchesse de Maufrigneuse culminated in the sale of that splendid property.

Madame Piédefer came to live with her daughter. The

combined fortunes of Monsieur de La Baudraye and his mother-in-law, who had been content to accept an annuity of twelve hundred francs on the lands of La Hautoy which she handed over to him, amounted to an acknowledged income of about fifteen thousand francs.

During the early days of her married life, Dinah had effected some alterations which had made the house at La Baudraye a very pleasant residence. She turned a spacious forecourt into a formal garden, pulling down wine-stores, presses, and shabby outhouses. Behind the manor-house, which, though small, did not lack style with its turrets and gables, she laid out a second garden with shrubs, flower-beds, and lawns, and divided it from the vineyards by a wall hidden under creepers. She also made everything within doors as comfortable as their narrow circumstances allowed.

In order not to be ruined by a young lady so very superior as Dinah seemed to be, Monsieur de La Baudraye was shrewd enough to say nothing as to the recovery of debts in Paris. This dead secrecy as to his money matters gave a touch of mystery to his character, and lent him dignity in his wife's eyes during the first years of their married life—so majestic is silence !

The alterations effected at La Baudraye made everybody eager to see the young mistress, all the more so because Dinah would never show herself, nor receive any company, before she felt quite settled in her home and had thoroughly studied the inhabitants, and, above all, her taciturn husband. When, one spring morning in 1825, pretty Madame de La Baudraye was first seen walking on the mall in a blue velvet dress, with her mother in black velvet, there was quite an excitement in Sancerre. This dress confirmed the young woman's reputation for superiority, brought up, as she had been, in the capital of Le Berry. Every one was afraid lest in entertaining this phoenix of the Department, the conversation should not be clever enough ; and, of course, everybody was constrained in

the presence of Madame de La Baudraye, who produced a sort of terror among the women-folk. As they admired a carpet of Indian shawl-pattern in the La Baudraye drawing-room, a Pompadour writing-table carved and gilt, brocade window curtains, and a Japanese bowl full of flowers on the round table among a selection of the newest books; when they heard the fair Dinah playing at sight, without making the smallest demur before seating herself at the piano, the idea they conceived of her superiority assumed vast proportions. That she might never allow herself to become careless or the victim of bad taste, Dinah had determined to keep herself up to the mark as to the fashions and latest developments of luxury by an active correspondence with Anna Grossetête, her bosom friend at Mademoiselle Chamarolles' school.

Anna, thanks to a fine fortune, had married the Comte de Fontaine's third son. Thus those ladies who visited at La Baudraye were perpetually piqued by Dinah's success in leading the fashion; do what they would, they were always behind, or, as they say on the turf, distanced.

While all these trifles gave rise to malignant envy in the ladies of Sancerre, Dinah's conversation and wit engendered absolute aversion. In her ambition to keep her mind on the level of Parisian brilliancy, Madame de La Baudraye allowed no vacuous small talk in her presence, no old-fashioned compliments, no pointless remarks; she would never endure the yelping of tittle-tattle, the backstairs slander which forms the staple of talk in the country. She liked to hear of the discoveries in science or art, or the latest pieces at the theatres, the newest poems, and by airing the cant words of the day she made a show of uttering thoughts.

The Abbé Duret, curé of Sancerre, an old man of a lost type of clergy in France, a man of the world with a liking for cards, had not dared to indulge this taste in so liberal a district as Sancerre; he, therefore, was delighted at Madame de La Baudraye's coming, and they got on together to admira-

tion. The sub-prefect, one Vicomte de Chargebœuf, was delighted to find in Madame de La Baudraye's drawing-room a sort of oasis where there was a truce to provincial life. As to Monsieur de Clagny, the public prosecutor, his admiration for the fair Dinah kept him bound to Sancerre. The enthusiastic lawyer refused all promotion, and became a quite pious adorer of this angel of grace and beauty. He was a tall, lean man, with a minatory countenance set off by terrible eyes in deep black circles, under enormous eyebrows; and his eloquence, very unlike his love-making, could be incisive.

Monsieur Gravier was a little, round man, who, in the days of the Empire, had been a charming ballad-singer; it was this accomplishment that had won him the high position of paymaster-general of the forces. Having mixed himself up in certain important matters in Spain with generals at that time in opposition, he had made the most of these connections to the Minister, who, in consideration of the place he had lost, promised him the receivership at Sancerre, and then allowed him to pay for the appointment. The frivolous spirit and light tone of the Empire had become ponderous in Monsieur Gravier; he did not, or would not, understand the wide difference between manners under the Restoration and under the Empire. Still, he conceived of himself as far superior to Monsieur de Clagny; his style was in better taste; he followed the fashion, was to be seen in a buff waistcoat, gray trousers, and neat, tightly fitting coats; he wore a fashionable silk tie slipped through a diamond ring, while the lawyer never dressed in anything but black—coat, trousers, and vest alike, and those often shabby.

These four men were the first to go into ecstasies over Dinah's cultivation, good taste, and refinement, and pronounced her a woman of most superior mind. Then the women said to each other: "Madame de La Baudraye must laugh at us behind our backs."

This view, which was more or less correct, kept them from

visiting at La Baudraye. Dinah, attainted and convicted of pedantry, because she spoke grammatically, was nicknamed the Sappho of Saint-Satur. At last everybody made insolent game of the great qualities of the woman who had thus roused the enmity of the ladies of Sancerre. And they ended by denying a superiority—after all, merely comparative!—which emphasized their ignorance, and did not forgive it. Where the whole population is hunchbacked, a straight shape is the monstrosity; Dinah was regarded as monstrous and dangerous, and she found herself in a desert.

Astonished at seeing the women of the neighborhood only at long intervals, and for visits of a few minutes, Dinah asked Monsieur de Clagny the reason of this state of things.

“You are too superior a woman to be liked by other women,” said the lawyer.

Monsieur Gravier, when questioned by the forlorn fair, only, after much entreaty, replied—

“Well, lady fair, you are not satisfied to be merely charming. You are clever and well educated, you know every book that comes out, you love poetry, you are a musician, and you talk delightfully. Women cannot forgive so much superiority.”

Men said to Monsieur de La Baudraye—

“You who have such a Superior Woman for a wife are very fortunate——” And at last he himself would say—

“I who have a Superior Woman for a wife, am very fortunate,” etc.

Madame Piédefer, flattered through her daughter, also allowed herself to say such things—“My daughter, who is a very Superior Woman, was writing yesterday to Madame de Fontaine such and such a thing.”

Those who know the world—France, Paris—know how true it is that many celebrities are thus created.

Two years later, by the end of the year 1825, Dinah de La

Baudraye was accused of not choosing to have any visitors but men; then it was said that she did not care for women—and that was a crime. Not a thing she could do, not her most trifling action, could escape criticism and misrepresentation. After making every sacrifice that a well-bred woman can make, and placing herself entirely in the right, Madame de La Baudraye was so rash as to say to a false friend who condoled with her on her isolation—

“I would rather have my bowl empty than with —— in it!”

This speech produced a terrible effect on Sancerre, and was cruelly retorted on the Sappho of Saint-Satur when, seeing her childless after five years of married life, *little de La Baudraye* became a by-word for laughter. To understand this provincial witticism, readers may be reminded of the Bailli de Ferrette—some, no doubt, having known him—of whom it was said that he was the bravest man in Europe for daring to walk on his legs, and who was accused of putting lead in his shoes to save himself from being blown away. Monsieur de La Baudraye, a sallow and almost diaphanous creature, would have been engaged by the Bailli de Ferrette as first gentleman-in-waiting if that diplomatist had been the Grand Duke of Baden instead of being merely his envoy.

Monsieur de La Baudraye, whose legs were so thin that, for mere decency, he wore false calves, whose thighs were like the arms of an average man, whose body was not unlike that of a cockchafer, would have been an advantageous foil to the Bailli de Ferrette. As he walked, the little vine-owner's leg-pads often twisted round on to his shins, so little did he make a secret of them, and he would thank any one who warned him of this little mishap. He wore knee-breeches, black silk stockings, and a white vest till 1824. After his marriage he adopted blue trousers and shoes with heels, which made Sancerre declare that he had added two inches to his stature that he might come up to his wife's chin. For ten years he was always seen in the same little bottle-green coat with large

white-metal buttons, and a black stock that accentuated his cold, stingy face, lighted up by gray-blue eyes as keen and passionless as a cat's. Being very gentle, as men are who act on a fixed plan of conduct, he seemed to make his wife happy by never contradicting her; he allowed her to do the talking, and was satisfied to move with the deliberate tenacity of an insect.

Dinah, adored for her beauty, in which she had no rival, and admired for her cleverness by the most gentlemanly men of the place, encouraged their admiration by conversations, for which, it was subsequently asserted, she prepared herself beforehand. Finding herself listened to with rapture, she soon began to listen to herself, enjoyed haranguing her audience, and at last regarded her friends as the chorus in a tragedy, there only to give her her cues. In fact, she had a very fine collection of phrases and ideas, derived either from books or by assimilating the opinions of her companions, and thus became a sort of mechanical instrument, going off on a round of phrases as soon as some chance remark released the spring. To do her justice, Dinah was choke full of knowledge, and read everything, even medical books, statistics, science, and jurisprudence; for she did not know how to spend her days when she had reviewed her flower-beds and given her orders to the gardener. Gifted with an excellent memory, and the talent which some women have for hitting on the right word, she could talk on any subject with the lucidity of a studied style. And so men came from Cosne, from la Charité, and from Nevers, on the right bank; from Léré, Vailly, Argent, Blancafort, and Aubigny, on the left bank, to be introduced to Madame de La Baudraye, as they used in Switzerland to be introduced to Madame de Staël. Those who only once heard the round of tunes emitted by this musical snuff-box went away amazed, and told such wonders of Dinah as made all the women jealous for ten leagues round.

There is an indescribable mental headiness in the admiration we inspire, or in the effect of playing a part, which fends off criticism from reaching the idol. An atmosphere, produced perhaps by unceasing nervous tension, forms a sort of halo, through which the world below is seen. How otherwise can we account for the perennial good faith which leads to so many repeated presentments of the same effects, and the constant ignoring of warnings given by children, such a terror to their parents, or by husbands, so familiar as they are with the peacock airs of their wives? Monsieur de La Baudraye had the frankness of a man who opens an umbrella at the first drop of rain. When his wife was started on the subject of negro emancipation or the improvement of convict prisons, he would take up his little blue cap and vanish without a sound, in the certainty of being able to get to Saint-Thibault to see off a cargo of puncheons, and return an hour later to find the discussion approaching a close. Or, if he had no business to attend to, he would go for a walk on the mall, whence he commanded the lovely panorama of the Loire valley, and take a draught of fresh air, while his wife was performing a sonata in words, or a dialectical duet.

Once fairly established as a Superior Woman, Dinah was eager to prove her devotion to the most remarkable creations of art. She threw herself into the propaganda of the romantic school, including, under Art, poetry and painting, literature, and sculpture, furniture and the opera. Thus she became a mediævalist. She was also interested in any treasures that dated from the Renaissance, and employed her allies as so many devoted commission agents. Soon after she was married she had become possessed of the Rougets' furniture, sold at Issoudun early in 1824. She purchased some very good things in the Nivernais and the Haute-Loire. At the New Year and on her birthday her friends never failed to give her some curiosities. These fancies found favor in the eyes of Monsieur de La Baudraye; they gave him an appearance of

sacrificing a few crowns to his wife's taste. In point of fact, his land mania allowed him to think of nothing but the estate of Anzy.

These "antiquities" at that time cost much less than modern furniture. By the end of five or six years the ante-room, the dining-room, the two drawing-rooms, and the boudoir which Dinah had arranged on the first floor of La Baudraye, every spot even to the staircase, were crammed with masterpieces collected in the four adjacent departments. These surroundings, which were called *queer* by the neighbors, were quite in harmony with Dinah. All these marvels, so soon to be the rage, struck the imagination of the strangers introduced to her; they came expecting something unusual; and they found their expectations surpassed when, behind a bower of flowers, they saw these catacombs full of old things, piled up as Sommerard used to pile them—that "Old Mortality" of furniture. And then these finds served as so many fountains which, turned on by a question, played off an essay on Jean Goujon, Michel Columb, Germain Pilon, Boulle, Van Huysum, and Boucher, the great native painter of Le Berry; on Clodion, the carver of wood, on Venetian mirrors, on Brustolone, an Italian tenor who was the Michael Angelo of boxwood and holm oak; on the thirteenth, fourteenth, fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries, on the glazes of Bernard de Palissy, the enamels of Petitot, the engravings of Albrecht Dürer—whom she called Dür; on illuminations on vellum, on Gothic architecture, early decorated, flamboyant and pure—enough to turn an old man's brain and fire a young man with enthusiasm.

Madame de La Baudraye, possessed with the idea of waking up Sancerre, tried to form a so-called literary circle. The presiding judge, Monsieur Boironge, who happened to have a house and garden on his hands, part of the Popinot-Chandier property, favored the notion of this coterie. The wily judge talked over the rules of the society with Madame de La

Baudraye ; he proposed to figure as one of the founders, and to let the house for fifteen years to the literary club. By the time it had existed a year the members were playing dominoes, billiards, and cards, and drinking mulled-wine, punch, and liqueurs. A few elegant little suppers were then given, and some masked balls during the Carnival. As to literature—there were the newspapers. Politics and business were discussed. Monsieur de La Baudraye was constantly there—on his wife's account, as he said jestingly.

This result deeply grieved the Superior Woman, who despaired of Sancerre, and collected the wit of the neighborhood in her own drawing-room. Nevertheless, and in spite of the efforts of Messieurs de Chargebœuf, Gravier, and de Clagny, of the Abbé Duret and the two chief magistrates, of a young doctor and a young assistant judge—all blind admirers of Dinah's—there were occasions when, weary of discussion, they allowed themselves an excursion into the domain of agreeable frivolity which constitutes the common basis of worldly conversation. Monsieur Gravier called this "from grave to gay." The Abbé Duret's rubber made another pleasing variety on the monologues of the oracle. The three rivals, tired of keeping their minds up to the level of the "high range of discussion"—as they called their conversation—but not daring to confess it, would sometimes turn with ingratiating hints to the old priest.

"Monsieur le Curé is dying for his game," they would say.

The wily priest lent himself very readily to the little trick. He protested :

"We should lose too much by ceasing to listen to our inspired hostess !" and so he would incite Dinah's magnanimity to take pity at last on her dear abbé.

This bold manœuvre, a device of the sub-prefect, was repeated with so much skill that Dinah never suspected her slaves of escaping to the prison-yard, so to speak, of the card-

table; and they would leave her one of the younger functionaries to harry.

One young landowner, and the dandy of Sancerre, fell away from Dinah's good graces in consequence of some rash demonstrations. After soliciting the honor of admission to this little circle, where he flattered himself he could snatch the blossom from the constituted authorities who guarded it, he was so unfortunate as to yawn in the middle of an explanation Dinah was favoring him with—for the fourth time, it is true—of the philosophy of Kant. Monsieur de la Thaumassière, the grandson of the historian of Le Berry, was thenceforth regarded as a man entirely bereft of soul, brains, understanding, and wit.

The three devotees, her slaves, each submitted to these exorbitant demands on their mind and attention, in hope of a crowning triumph, when at last Dinah should become human; for neither of them was so bold as to imagine that Dinah would give up her innocence as a wife till she should have lost all her illusions. In 1826, when she was surrounded by adorers, Dinah completed her twentieth year, and the Abbé Duret kept her in a sort of perfervid Catholicism; so her worshipers had to be content to overwhelm her with little attentions and small services, only too happy to be taken for the carpet-knights of this sovereign lady by strangers admitted to spend an evening or two at La Baudraye.

“Madame de La Baudraye is a fruit that must be left to ripen.” This was the opinion of Monsieur Gravier, who was waiting.

As to the lawyer, he wrote letters four pages long, to which Dinah replied in soothing speech as she walked, leaning on his arm, round and round the lawn after dinner.

Madame de La Baudraye, thus guarded by three passions, and always under the eye of her pious mother, escaped the malignity of slander. It was so evident to all Sancerre that no two of these three men would ever leave the third alone

with Madame de La Baudraye, that their jealousy was a comedy to the lookers-on.

To reach Saint-Thibault from Cæsar's gate there is a way much shorter than that by the ramparts, down what is known in mountainous districts as a *coursière*, called at Sancerre *le Casse-cou*, or Break-neck Alley. The name is significant as applied to a path down the steepest part of the hillside, thickly strewn with stones, and shut in by the high banks of the vineyards on each side. By way of the Break-neck the distance from Sancerre to La Baudraye is much abridged. The ladies of the place, jealous of the Sappho of Saint-Satur, were wont to walk on the mall, looking down this Longchamp of the bigwigs, whom they would stop and engage in conversation—sometimes the sub-prefect and sometimes the public prosecutor—and who would listen with every sign of impatience or uncivil absence of mind. As the turrets of La Baudraye are visible from the mall, many a younger man came to contemplate the abode of Dinah while envying the ten or twelve privileged persons who might spend their afternoons with the Queen of the neighborhood.

Monsieur de La Baudraye was not slow to discover the advantage he, as Dinah's husband, held over his wife's adorers, and he made use of them without any disguise, obtaining a remission of taxes, and gaining two lawsuits. In every litigation he used the public prosecutor's name with such good effect that the matter was carried no further, and, like all undersized men, he was contentious and litigious in business, though in the gentlest manner.

At the same time, the more certainly guiltless she was, the less conceivable did Madame de La Baudraye's position seem to the prying eyes of these women. Frequently, at the house of the president of Boirouge, the ladies of a certain age would spend a whole evening discussing the La Baudraye household, among themselves of course. They all had suspicions of a mystery, a secret such as always interests women who have

had some experience of life. And, in fact, at La Baudraye one of those slow and monotonous conjugal tragedies was being played out which would have remained for ever unknown if the merciless scalpel of the nineteenth century, guided by the insistent demand for novelty, had not dissected the darkest corners of the heart, or at any rate those which the decency of past centuries left unopened. And that domestic drama sufficiently accounts for Dinah's immaculate virtue during her early married life.

A young lady, whose triumphs at school had been the outcome of her pride, and whose first scheme in life had been rewarded by a victory, was not likely to pause in such a brilliant career. Frail as Monsieur de La Baudraye might seem, he was really an unhopèd-for good match for Mademoiselle Dinah Piédefer. But what was the hidden motive of this country landowner when, at forty-four, he married a girl of seventeen; and what could his wife make out of the bargain? This was the text of Dinah's first meditations.

The little man never behaved quite as his wife expected. To begin with, he allowed her to take the five precious acres now wasted in pleasure grounds round La Baudraye, and paid, almost with generosity, the seven or eight thousand francs required by Dinah for improvements in the house, enabling her to buy the furniture at the Rougets' sale at Issoudun, and to redecorate her rooms in various styles—Mediæval, Louis XIV., and Pompadour. The young wife found it difficult to believe that Monsieur de La Baudraye was so miserly as he was reputed, or else she must have great influence with him. This illusion lasted a year and a half.

After Monsieur de La Baudraye's second journey to Paris, Dinah discovered in him the Arctic coldness of a provincial miser whenever money was in question. The first time she asked for supplies she played the sweetest of the comedies of which Eve invented the secret; but the little man put it plainly

to his wife that he gave her two hundred francs a month for her personal expenses, and paid Madame Piédefer twelve hundred francs a year as a charge on the lands of La Hautoy, and that this was two hundred francs a year more than was agreed to under the marriage-settlement.

"I say nothing of the cost of housekeeping," he said in conclusion. "You may give your friends cake and tea in the evening, for you must have some amusement. But I, who spent but fifteen hundred francs a year as a bachelor, now spend six thousand, including rates and repairs, and this is rather too much in relation to the nature of our property. A vine-grower is never sure of what his expenses may be—the making, the duty, the casks—while the returns depend on a scorching day or a sudden frost. Small owners, like us, whose income is far from being fixed, must base their estimates on their minimum, for they have no means of making up a deficit or a loss. What would become of us if a wine merchant became bankrupt? In my opinion, promissory notes are so many cabbage-leaves. To live as we are living, we ought always to have a year's income in hand and count on no more than two-thirds of our returns."

Any form of resistance is enough to make a woman vow to subdue it; Dinah flung herself against a will of iron padded round with gentleness. She tried to fill the little man's soul with jealousy and alarms, but it was stockaded with insolent confidence. He left Dinah, when he went to Paris, with all the convictions of Médor* in Angélique's fidelity. When she affected cold disdain, to nettle this changeling by the scorn a courtesan sometimes shows to her "protector," and which acts on him with the certainty of the screw of a winepress, Monsieur de La Baudraye gazed at his wife with fixed eyes, like those of a cat which, in the midst of domestic broils, waits till a blow is threatened before stirring from its place. The strange, speechless uneasiness that was perceptible under

* Medora, in "Orlando Furioso."

his mute indifference almost terrified the young wife of twenty ; she could not at first understand the selfish quiescence of this man, who might be compared to a cracked pot, and who, in order to live, regulated his existence with the unchangeable regularity which a clock-maker requires of a clock. So the little man always evaded his wife, while she always hit out, as it were, ten feet above his head.

Dinah's fits of fury when she saw herself condemned never to escape from La Baudraye and Sancerre are more easily imagined than described—she who had dreamed of handling a fortune and managing the dwarf whom she, the giant, had at first humored in order to command. In the hope of some day making her appearance on the greater stage of Paris, she accepted the vulgar incense of her attendant knights with a view to seeing Monsieur de La Baudraye's name drawn from the electoral urn ; for she supposed him to be ambitious, after seeing him return thrice from Paris, each time a step higher on the social ladder. But when she struck on the man's heart, it was as though she had tapped on marble ! The man who had been receiver-general and referendary, who was now master of appeals, officer of the Legion of Honor, and royal commissioner, was but a mole throwing up its little hills round and round a vineyard ! Then some lamentations were poured into the heart of the public prosecutor, of the sub-prefect, even of Monsieur Gravier, and they all increased in their devotion to this sublime victim ; for, like all women, she never mentioned her speculative schemes, and—again like all women—finding such speculation vain, she ceased to speculate.

Dinah, tossed by mental storms, was still undecided when, in the autumn of 1827, the news was told of the purchase by the Baron de La Baudraye of the estate of Anzy. Then the little old man showed an impulsion of pride and glee which for a few months changed the current of his wife's ideas ; she fancied there was a hidden vein of greatness in the man when

she found him applying for a patent of entail. In his triumph the baron exclaimed—

“Dinah, you shall be a countess yet!”

There was then a patched-up reunion between the husband and wife, such as can never endure, and which only humiliated and fatigued a woman whose apparent superiority was unreal, while her unseen superiority was genuine. This whimsical medley is commoner than people think. Dinah, who was ridiculous from the perversity of her cleverness, had really great qualities of soul, but circumstances did not bring these rarer powers to light, while a provincial life debased the small change of her wit from day to day. Monsieur de La Baudraye, on the contrary, devoid of soul, of strength, and of wit, was fated to figure as a man of character, simply by pursuing a plan of conduct which he was too feeble to change.

There was in their lives a first phase, lasting six years, during which Dinah, alas! became utterly provincial. In Paris there are several kinds of women: the duchess and the financier's wife, the ambassadress and the consul's wife, the wife of the minister who is a minister, and of him who is no longer a minister; then there is the lady—quite the lady—of the right bank of the Seine and of the left. But in the country there is but one kind of woman, and she, poor thing, is the provincial woman.

This remark points to one of the sores of modern society. It must be clearly understood: France in the nineteenth century is divided into two broad zones—Paris and the provinces. The provinces jealous of Paris; Paris never thinking of the provinces but to demand money. Of old, Paris was the capital of the provinces, and the Court ruled the capital; now, all Paris is the Court, and all the country is the town.

However lofty, beautiful, and clever a girl born in any department of France may be on entering life, if, like Dinah Piédefer, she marries in the country and remains there, she

inevitably becomes the provincial woman. In spite of every determination, the commonplace of second-rate ideas, the indifference to dress, the culture of vulgar people, swamp the sublimer essence hidden in the youthful plant ; all is over, it falls into decay. How should it be otherwise ? From their earliest years girls bred in the country see none but provincials ; they cannot imagine anything superior, their choice lies among mediocrities ; provincial fathers marry their daughters to provincial sons ; crossing the races is never thought of, and the brain inevitably degenerates, so that in many country towns intellect is as rare as the breed is hideous. Mankind becomes dwarfed in mind and body, for the fatal principle of conformity of fortune governs every matrimonial alliance. Men of talent, artists, superior brains—every bird of brilliant plumage flies to Paris. The provincial women, inferior in herself, is also inferior through her husband. How is she to live happy under this crushing twofold consciousness ?

But there is a third and terrible element beside her congenital and conjugal inferiority which contributes to make the figure arid and gloomy ; to reduce it, narrow it, distort it fatally. Is not one of the most flattering unctions a woman can lay to her soul the assurance of being something in the existence of a superior man, chosen by herself, wittingly, as if to have some revenge on marriage, wherein her tastes were so little consulted ? But if in the country the husbands are inferior beings, the bachelors are no less so. When a provincial wife commits her “little sin,” she falls in love with some so-called handsome native, some indigenous dandy, a youth who wears gloves and is supposed to ride well ; but she knows at the bottom of her soul that her fancy is in pursuit of the commonplace, more or less well dressed. Dinah was preserved from this danger by the idea impressed upon her of her own superiority. Even if she had not been so carefully guarded during her early married life as she was by her mother, whose presence never weighed upon her till the day when she wanted

to be rid of it, her pride, and her high sense of her own destinies, would have protected her. Flattered as she was to find herself surrounded by admirers, she saw no lover among them. No man here realized the poetical ideal which she and Anna Grossetête had been wont to sketch. When, stirred by the involuntary temptations suggested by the homage she received, she asked herself: "If I had to make a choice, whom should it be?" she owned to a preference for Monsieur de Chargebœuf, a gentleman of good family, whose appearance and manners she liked, but whose cold nature, selfishness, and narrow ambition, never rising above a prefecture and a good marriage, repelled her. At a word from his family, who were alarmed lest he should be killed for an intrigue, the vicomte had already deserted a woman he had loved in the town where he previously had been sub-prefect.

Monsieur de Clagny, on the other hand, the only man whose mind appealed to hers, whose ambition was founded on love, and who knew what love means, Dinah thought perfectly odious. When Dinah saw herself condemned to six years' residence at Sancerre, she was on the point of accepting the devotion of Monsieur le Vicomte de Chargebœuf; but he was appointed to a prefecture and left the district. To Monsieur de Clagny's great satisfaction, the new sub-prefect was a married man whose wife made friends with Dinah. The lawyer had now no rival to fear but Monsieur Gravier. Now Monsieur Gravier was the typical man of forty of whom women make use while they laugh at him, whose hopes they intentionally and remorselessly encourage, as we are kind to a beast of burden. In six years, among all the men who were introduced to her from twenty leagues round, there was not one in whose presence Dinah was conscious of the excitement caused by personal beauty, by a belief in promised happiness, by the impact of a superior soul, or the anticipation of a love affair, even an unhappy one.

Thus none of Dinah's choicest faculties had a chance of

developing ; she swallowed many insults to her pride, which was constantly suffering under the husband who so calmly walked the stage as supernumerary in the drama of her life. Compelled to bury her wealth of love, she showed only the surface to the world. Now and then she would try to arouse herself, try to form some manly resolution ; but she was kept in leading strings by the need for money. And so, slowly and in spite of the ambitious protests and grievous recriminations of her own mind, she underwent the provincial metamorphosis here described. Each day took with it a fragment of her spirited determination. She had laid down a rule for the care of her person, which she gradually departed from. Though at first she kept up with the fashions and the little novelties of elegant life, she was obliged to limit her purchases by the amount of her allowance. Instead of six hats, caps, or gowns, she resigned herself to one gown each season. She was so much admired in a certain bonnet that she made it do duty for two seasons. So it was in everything.

Not infrequently her artistic sense led her to sacrifice the requirements of her person to secure some bit of Gothic furniture. By the seventh year she had come so low as to think it convenient to have her morning dresses made at home by the best needlewoman in the neighborhood ; and her mother, her husband, and her friends pronounced her charming in these inexpensive costumes which did credit to her taste. Her ideas were imitated ! As she had no standard of comparison, Dinah fell into the snares that surround the provincial woman. If a Parisian woman's hips are too narrow or too full, her inventive wit, the desire to please, helps her to find some heroic remedy ; if she has some defect, some ugly spot, or small disfigurement, she is capable of making it an adornment ; this is often seen ; but the provincial woman—never ! If her waist is too short and her figure ill balanced, well, she makes up her mind to the worst, and her adorers—or they do not adore her—must take her as she is, while the Parisian always insists on being

taken for what she is not. Hence the preposterous bustles, the audacious flatness, the ridiculous fullness, the hideous outlines ingeniously displayed, to which a whole town will become accustomed, but which are so astounding when a provincial woman makes her appearance in Paris or among Parisians. Dinah, who was extremely slim, showed it off to excess, and never knew the moment when it became ridiculous; when, reduced by the dull weariness of her life, she looked like a skeleton in clothes; and her friends, seeing her every day, did not observe the gradual change in her appearance.

This is one of the natural results of a provincial life. In spite of marriage, a young woman preserves her beauty for some time, and the town is proud of her; but everybody sees her every day, and when people meet every day their perception is dulled. If, like Madame de La Baudraye, she loses her color, it is scarcely noticed; or, again, if she flushes a little, that is intelligible and interesting. A little neglect is thought charming, and her face is so carefully studied, so well known, that slight changes are scarcely noticed, and regarded at last as "beauty spots." When Dinah ceased to have a new dress with a new season, she seemed to have made a concession to the philosophy of the place.

It is the same with matters of speech, choice of words and ideas, as it is with matters of feeling. The mind can rust as well as the body if it is not rubbed up in Paris; but the thing on which provincialism most sets its stamp is gesture, gait, and movement; these soon lose the briskness which Paris constantly keeps alive. The provincial is used to walk and move in a world devoid of accident or change; there is nothing to be avoided; so in Paris she walks on as raw recruits do, never remembering that there may be hindrances, for there are none in her way in her native place, where she is known, where she is always in her place, and every one makes way for her. Thus she loses all the charm of the unforeseen.

And have you ever noticed the effect on human beings of a

life in common? By the ineffaceable instinct of simian mimicry they all tend to copy each other. Each one, without knowing it, acquires the gestures, the tone of voice, the manner, the attitudes, the very countenance of others. In six years Dinah had sunk to the pitch of the society she lived in. As she acquired Monsieur de Clagny's ideas she assumed his tone of voice; she unconsciously fell into masculine manners from seeing none but men; she fancied that by laughing at what was ridiculous in them she was safe from catching it; but, as often happens, some smut that she laughed at remained in the grain.

A Parisian woman sees so many examples of good taste that a contrary result ensues. In Paris women learn to seize the hour and moment when they may appear to advantage; while Madame de La Baudraye, accustomed to take the stage, acquired an indefinable theatrical and domineering manner, the air of a *prima donna* coming forward on the boards, of which ironical smiles would soon have cured her in the capital.

But after she had acquired this stock of absurdities, and, deceived by her worshipers, imagined them to be added graces, a moment of terrible awakening came upon her like the fall of an avalanche from a mountain. In one day she was crushed by a frightful comparison.

In 1822, after the departure of Monsieur de Chargebœuf, she was excited by the anticipation of a little pleasure; she was expecting the Baronne de Fontaine. Anna's husband, who was now director-general under the minister of finance, took advantage of leave of absence on the occasion of his father's death to take his wife to Italy. Anna wished to spend a day at Sancerre with her school-friend. This meeting was strangely disastrous. Anna, who at school had been far less handsome than Dinah, now, as Baronne de Fontaine, was a thousand times handsomer than the Baronne de La Baudraye, in spite of her fatigue and her traveling dress. Anna stepped out of an elegant traveling chaise loaded with Paris

milliners' boxes, and she had with her a lady's-maid, whose airs quite frightened Dinah. All the difference between a woman of Paris and a provincial was at once evident to Dinah's intelligent eye; she saw herself as her friend saw her—and Anna found her altered beyond recognition. Anna spent six thousand francs a year on herself alone, as much as kept the whole household at La Baudraye.

In twenty-four hours the friends had exchanged many confidences; and the Parisian, seeing herself so far superior to the phoenix of Mademoiselle Chamarolles' school, showed her provincial friend such kindness, such attentions, while giving her certain explanations, as were so many stabs to Dinah, though she perfectly understood that Anna's advantages all lay on the surface, while her own were for ever buried.

When Anna had left, Madame de La Baudraye, by this time two-and-twenty, fell into the depths of despair.

"What is it that ails you?" asked Monsieur de Clagny, seeing her so dejected.

"Anna," said she, "has learned to live, while I have been learning to endure."

A tragi-comedy was, in fact, being enacted in Madame de La Baudraye's house, in harmony with her struggles over money matters and her successive transformations—a drama to which no one but Monsieur de Clagny and the Abbé Duret ever knew the clue, when Dinah in sheer idleness, or perhaps sheer vanity, revealed the secret of her anonymous fame.

Though a mixture of verse and prose is a monstrous anomaly in French literature, there must be exceptions to the rule. This tale will be one of the two instances in these Studies of violation of the laws of narrative; for to give a just idea of the unconfessed struggle which may excuse, though it cannot absolve Dinah, it is necessary to give an analysis of a poem which was the outcome of her deep despair.

Her patience and her resignation alike broken by the departure of the Vicomte de Chargebœuf, Dinah took the

worthy abbé's advice to exhale her evil thoughts in verse—a proceeding which perhaps accounts for some poets.

“You will find such relief as those who write epitaphs or elegies over those whom they have lost. Pain is soothed in the heart as lines surge up in the brain.”

This strange production caused a great ferment in the departments of the Allier, the Nièvre, and the Cher, proud to possess a poet capable of rivalry with the glories of Paris. “*Paquita la Sevillane*,” by Jan Diaz, was published in the “*Echo du Morvan*,” a review which for eighteen months maintained its existence in spite of provincial indifference. Some knowing persons at Nevers declared that Jan Diaz was making fun of the new school, just then bringing out its eccentric verse, full of vitality and imagery, and of brilliant effects produced by defying the Muse under pretext of adapting German, English, and Romanesque mannerisms.

The poem began with this ballad :

Ah! if you knew the fragrant plain,
The air, the sky, of golden Spain,
 Its fervid noons, its balmy spring,
Sad daughters of the northern gloom,
Of love, of heav'n, of native home,
 You never would presume to sing!

For men are there of other mould
Than those who live in this dull cold.
 And there to music low and sweet
Sevillian maids, from eve till dawn,
Dance lightly on the moonlit lawn
 In satin shoes, on dainty feet.

Ah, you would be the first to blush
Over your dancers' romp and rush,
 And your too hideous carnival,
That turns your cheeks all chill and blue,
And skips the mud in hob-nail'd shoe—
 A truly dismal festival.

To pale-faced girls, and in a squalid room,
 Paquita sang; the murky town beneath
 Was Rouen, whence the slender spires rise
 To chew the storm with teeth,
 Rouen so hideous, noisy, full of rage—

And here followed a magnificent description of Rouen—where Dinah had never been—written with the affected brutality which, a little later, inspired so many imitations of Juvenal; a contrast drawn between the life of a manufacturing town and the careless life of Spain, between the love of heaven and of human beauty, and the worship of machinery; in short, between poetry and sordid money-making.

Then Jan Diaz accounted for Paquita's horror of Normandy by saying—

Seville, you see, had been her native home;
 Seville, where skies are blue and evening sweet.
 She, at thirteen, the sovereign of the town,
 Had lovers at her feet.

For her three Toreadors had gone to death
 Or victory; the prize to be a kiss—
 One kiss from those red lips of sweetest breath—
 A longed-for touch of bliss!

The features of the Spanish girl's portrait have served so often as those of the courtesan in so many self-styled *poems*, that it would be tiresome to quote here the hundred lines of description. To judge of the lengths to which audacity had carried Dinah, it will be enough to give the conclusion. According to Madame de La Baudraye's ardent pen, Paquita was so entirely created for love that she can hardly have met with a knight worthy of her; for

. . . . In her passionate fire
 Every man would have swooned from the heat,
 When she at love's feast, in her fervid desire,
 As yet had but taken her seat.

"And yet she could quit the joys of Seville, its woods and fields of orange-trees, for a Norman soldier who won her love and carried her away to his hearth and home. She did not weep for her Andalusia, the Soldier was her whole joy. But the day came when he was compelled to start for Russia in the footsteps of the great Emperor."

Nothing could be more dainty than the description of the parting between the Spanish girl and the Norman Captain of Artillery, who, in the delirium of passion expressed with feeling worthy of Byron, exacted from Paquita a vow of absolute fidelity, in the cathedral at Rouen, in front of the altar of the Blessed Virgin, who

Though a Maid is a woman, and never forgives
When lovers are false to their vows.

A large part of the poem was devoted to describing Paquita's sufferings when alone in Rouen waiting till the campaign was over; she stood writhing at the window bars, as she watched happy couples go by; she suppressed the passion in her heart with a determination that consumed her; she lived on narcotics and exhausted herself in dreams.

Almost she died, but still her heart was true;
And when at last her soldier came again,
He found her beauty ever fresh and new—
He had not loved in vain!

"But he, pale and frozen by the cold of Russia, chilled to the very marrow, met his yearning fair one with a melancholy smile."

The whole poem was written up to this situation, which was worked out with such vigor and boldness as too entirely justified the Abbé Duret.

Paquita, on reaching the limits set to real love, did not, like

Julie and Héloïse, throw herself into the ideal; no, she rushed into the paths of vice, which is, no doubt, shockingly natural; but she did it without any touch of magnificence, for lack of means, as it would be difficult to find in Rouen men impassioned enough to place Paquita in a suitable setting of luxury and splendor. This horrible realism, emphasized by gloomy poetic feeling, had inspired some passages such as modern poetry is too free with, rather too like the flayed anatomical figures known to artists as *écorchés*. Then, by a highly philosophical revulsion, after describing the house of ill-fame where the Andalusian ended her days, the writer came back to the ballad at the opening:

Paquita now is faded, shrunk, and old,
But she it was who sang:

“If you but knew the fragrant plain,
The air, the sky, of golden Spain,” etc.

The gloomy vigor of this poem, running to about six hundred lines, and serving as a powerful foil, to use a painter's word, to the two *séguidillas* at the beginning and end, the masculine utterance of an almost inexpressible grief alarmed the woman who found herself admired by three departments, under the black cloak of the anonymous. While she fully enjoyed the intoxicating delights of success, Dinah dreaded the malignity of provincial society, where more than one woman, if the secret should slip out, would certainly find points of resemblance between the writer and Paquita. Reflection came too late; Dinah shuddered with shame at having made “copy” of some of her woes.

“Write no more,” said the Abbé Duret. “You will cease to be a woman; you will be a poet.”

Moulins, Nevers, Bourges were searched to find Jan Diaz; but Dinah was impenetrable. To remove any evil impression, in case any unforeseen chance should betray her name, she

wrote a charming poem in two cantos on "The Mass Oak," a legend of the Nivernais:

"Once on a time the folk of Nevers and the folk of Saint-Saulge, at war with each other, came at daybreak to fight a battle, in which one or other should perish, and met in the forest of Faye. And then there stood between them, under an oak, a priest whose aspect in the morning sun was so commanding that the foes at his bidding heard mass as he performed it under the oak, and at the words of the Gospel they made friends."

The oak is still shown in the forest of Faye.

This poem, immeasurably superior to "Paquita la Sevillane," was far less admired.

After these two attempts Madame de La Baudraye, feeling herself a poet, had a light on her brow and a flash in her eyes that made her handsomer than ever. She cast longing looks at Paris, aspiring to fame—and fell back into her den of La Baudraye, her daily squabbles with her husband, and her little circle, where everybody's character, intentions, and remarks were too well known not to have become a bore. Though she found relief from her dreary life in literary work, and poetry echoed loudly in her empty life, though she thus found an outlet for her energies, literature increased her hatred of the gray and ponderous provincial atmosphere.

When, after the Revolution of 1830, the glory of George Sand was reflected on Le Berry, many a town envied La Châtre the privilege of having given birth to this rival of Madame de Staël and Camille Maupin, and were ready to do homage to minor feminine talent. Thus there arose in France a vast number of tenth Muses, young girls or young wives tempted from a silent life by the bait of glory. Very strange doctrines were proclaimed as to the part women should play in society. Though the sound commonsense which lies at the root of the French nature was not perverted, women were

suffered to express ideas and profess opinions which they would not have owned to a few years previously.

Monsieur de Clagny took advantage of this outbreak of freedom to collect the works of Jan Diaz in a small volume printed by Desroziers at Moulins. He wrote a little notice of the author, too early snatched from the world of letters, which was amusing to those who were in the secret, but which even then had not the merit of novelty. Such practical jokes, capital so long as the author remains unknown, fall rather flat if subsequently the poet stands confessed.

From this point of view, however, the memoir of Jan Diaz, born at Bourges in 1807, the son of a Spanish prisoner, may very likely some day deceive the compiler of some Universal Biography. Nothing is overlooked; neither the names of the professors at the Bourges college, nor those of his deceased schoolfellows, such as Lousteau, Bianchon, and other famous natives of the province, who, it is said, knew the dreamy, melancholy boy and his precocious bent toward poetry. An elegy: "Tristesse" (Melancholy), written at school; the two poems "Paquita la Sevillane" and "Le Chêne de la Messe" (The Mass Oak); three sonnets, a description of the cathedral and the house of Jacques Cœur at Bourges, with a tale called "Carola," published as the work he was engaged on at the time of his death, constituted the whole of these literary remains; and the poet's last hours, full of misery and despair, could not fail to wring the hearts of the feeling public of the Nièvre, the Bourbonnais, the Cher, and the Morvan, where he died near Château-Chinon, unknown to all, even to the woman he had loved!

Of this little yellow paper volume two hundred copies were printed; one hundred and fifty were sold—about fifty in each department. This average of tender and poetic souls in three departments of France is enough to revive the enthusiasm of writers as to the French spirit, which nowadays is more apt to expend itself in business than in books.

When Monsieur de Clagny had given away a certain number of copies, Dinah still had seven or eight, wrapped up in the newspapers which had published notices of the work. Twenty copies forwarded to the Paris papers were swamped in the editor's offices. Nathan was taken in as well as several of his fellow-countrymen of Le Berry, and wrote an article on the great man, in which he credited him with all the fine qualities we discover in those who are dead and buried.

Lousteau, warned by his former schoolfellows, who could not remember Jan Diaz, waited for information from Sancerre, and learned that Jan Diaz was a pseudonym assumed by a woman.

Then, in and around Sancerre, Madame de La Baudraye became the rage; she was the future rival of George Sand. From Sancerre to Bourges a poem was praised which, at any other time, would certainly have been hooted. The provincial public—like every French public, perhaps—does not share the love of the King of the French for the happy medium: it lifts you to the skies or drags you in the mud.

By this time the good abbé, Madame de La Baudraye's counselor, was dead; he would certainly have prevented her rushing into public life. But three years of work without recognition weighed on Dinah's soul, and she accepted the clatter of fame as a substitute for her disappointed ambitions. Poetry and dreams of celebrity, which had lulled her grief since her meeting with Anna Grossetête, no longer sufficed to exhaust the activity of her morbid heart. The Abbé Duret, who had talked of the world when the voice of religion was impotent, who understood Dinah, and promised her a happy future by assuring her that God would compensate her for sufferings bravely endured—this good old man could no longer stand between the opening to sin and the handsome young woman he had called his daughter.

The wise old priest had more than once endeavored to enlighten Dinah as to her husband's character, telling her that

the man could hate ; but women are not ready to believe in such force in weak natures, and hatred is too constantly in action not to be a vital force. Dinah, finding her husband incapable of love, denied him the power to hate.

“Do not confound hatred and vengeance,” said the abbé. “They are two quite different sentiments. One is the instinct of small minds ; the other is the outcome of law which great souls obey. God is avenged, but He does not hate. Hatred is a vice of narrow souls ; they feed it with all their meanness, and make it a pretext for sordid tyranny. So beware of offending Monsieur de La Baudraye ; he would forgive an infidelity, because he could make capital of it, but he would be doubly implacable if you should touch him on the spot so cruelly wounded by Monsieur Milaud of Nevers, and would make your life unendurable.”

Now, at the time when the whole countryside—Nevers and Sancerre, Le Morvan and Le Berry—was priding itself on Madame de La Baudraye, and lauding her under the name of Jan Diaz, “little La Baudraye” felt her glory a mortal blow. He alone knew the secret source of “Paquita la Sevillane.” When this terrible work was spoken of, everybody said of Dinah—“Poor woman ! Poor soul !”

The women rejoiced in being able to pity her who had so long oppressed them ; never had Dinah seemed to stand higher in the eyes of the neighborhood.

The shriveled old man, more wrinkled, yellower, feebler than ever, gave no sign ; but Dinah sometimes detected in his eyes, as he looked at her, a sort of icy venom which gave the lie to his increased politeness and gentleness. She understood at last that this was not, as she had supposed, a mere domestic squabble ; but when she forced an explanation with her “insect,” as Monsieur Gravier called him, she found the cold, hard impassibility of steel. She flew into a passion ; she reproached him for her life these eleven years past ; she made—intentionally—what women call a scene. But “little

La Baudraye" sat in an armchair with his eyes shut, and listened phlegmatically to the storm. And, as usual, the dwarf got the better of his wife. Dinah saw that she had done wrong in writing; she vowed never to write another line, and she kept her vow.

Then was there desolation in the Sancerrois.

"Why did not Madame de La Baudraye compose any more verses?" was the universal cry.

At this time Madame de La Baudraye had no enemies; every one rushed to see her, not a week passed without fresh introductions. The wife of the presiding judge, an august bourgeoisie, *née* Popinot-Chandier, desired her son, a youth of two-and-twenty, to pay his humble respects at La Baudraye, and flattered herself that she might see her Gatien in the good graces of this Superior Woman. The words Superior Woman had superseded the absurd nickname of The Sappho of Saint-Satur. This lady, who for nine years had led the opposition, was so delighted at the good reception accorded to her son that she became loud in her praises of the Muse of Sancerre.

"After all," she exclaimed, in reply to a tirade from Madame de Clagny, who hated her husband's supposed mistress, "she is the handsomest and cleverest woman in the whole province!"

After scrambling through so many brambles and setting off on so many different roads, after dreaming of love in splendor and scenting the darkest dramas, thinking such terrible joys would be cheaply purchased so weary was she of her dreary existence, one day Dinah fell into the pit she had sworn to avoid. Seeing Monsieur de Clagny always sacrificing himself, and at last refusing a high appointment in Paris, where his family wanted to see him, she said to herself: "He loves me!" She vanquished her repulsion, and seemed willing to reward so much constancy.

It was to this impulse of generosity on her part that a coalition was due, formed in Sancerre to secure the return of

Monsieur de Clagny at the next elections. Madame de La Baudraye had dreamed of going to Paris in the wake of the new deputy.

But, in spite of the most solemn promises, the hundred and fifty votes to be recorded in favor of this adorer of the lovely Dinah—who hoped to see this defender of the widow and the orphan wearing the gown of the keeper of the seals—figured as an imposing minority of fifty votes. The jealousy of the president of Boirouge, and Monsieur Gravier's hatred, for he believed in the candidate's supremacy in Dinah's heart, had been worked upon by a young sub-prefect; and for this worthy and exemplary deed the allies got the young man made a prefect elsewhere.

"I shall never cease to regret," said he, as he quitted Sancerre, "that I did not succeed in pleasing Madame de La Baudraye; that would have made my triumph complete!"

The household that was thus racked by domestic troubles was calm on the surface; here were two ill-assorted but resigned beings, and the indescribable propriety, the lie that society insists on, and which to Dinah was an unendurable yoke. Why did she long to throw off the mask she had worn for twelve years? Whence this weariness which, every day, increased her hope of finding herself a widow?

The reader who has noted all the phases of her existence will have understood the various illusions by which Dinah, like many another woman, had been deceived. After an attempt to master Monsieur de La Baudraye, she had indulged the hope of becoming a mother. Between those miserable disputes over household matters and the melancholy conviction as to her fate, quite a long time had elapsed. Then, when she had looked for consolation, the consoler, Monsieur de Chargebœuf, had left her. Thus the overwhelming temptation which commonly causes women to sin had hitherto been absent. For if there are, after all, some women who make straight for unfaithfulness, are there not many more who cling

to hope, and do not fall till they have wandered long in a labyrinth of secret woes?

Such was Dinah. She had so little impulse to fail in her duty, that she did not care enough for Monsieur de Clagny to forgive him his defeat.

Then the move to the Castle of Anzy, the rearrangement of her collected treasures and curiosities, which derived added value from the splendid setting which Philibert de Lorme seemed to have planned on purpose for this museum, occupied her for several months, giving her leisure to meditate one of those decisive steps that startle the public, ignorant of the motives which, however, it sometimes discovers by dint of gossip and suppositions.

Madame de La Baudraye had been greatly struck by the reputation of Lousteau, who was regarded as a lady's man of the first water in consequence of his intimacies among actresses; she was anxious to know him; she read his books, and was fired with enthusiasm, less perhaps for his talents than for his success with women; and to attract him to the country, she started the notion that it was obligatory on Sancerre to return one of its great men at the elections. She made Gatien Boirouge write to the great physician, Bianchon, whom he claimed as a cousin through the Popinots. Then she persuaded an old friend of the departed Madame Lousteau to stir up the journalist's ambitions by letting him know that certain persons in Sancerre were firmly bent on electing a deputy from among the distinguished men in Paris.

Tired of her commonplace neighbors, Madame de La Baudraye would thus at last meet really illustrious men, and might give her fall the lustre of fame.

Neither Lousteau nor Bianchon replied; they were waiting, perhaps, till the holidays. Bianchon, who had won his professor's chair the year before after a brilliant contest, could not leave his lectures.

In the month of September, when the vintage was at its

height, the two Parisians arrived in their native province, and found it absorbed in the unremitting toil of the wine-cup of 1836; there could therefore be no public demonstration in their favor. "We have fallen flat," said Lousteau to his companion, in the slang of the stage.

In 1836, Lousteau, worn by sixteen years of struggle in the capital, and aged quite as much by pleasure as by penury, hard work, and disappointments, looked eight-and-forty, though he was no more than thirty-seven. He was already bald, and had assumed a Byronic air in harmony with his early decay and the lines furrowed in his face by over-indulgence in champagne. He ascribed these signs-manual of dissipation to the severities of a literary life, declaring that the Press was murderous; and he gave it to be understood that it consumed superior talents, so as to lend a grace to his exhaustion. In his native town he thought proper to exaggerate his affected contempt of life and his spurious misanthropy. Still his eyes could flash with fire like a volcano supposed to be extinct, and he endeavored, by dressing fashionably, to make up for the lack of youth that might strike a woman's eye.

Horace Bianchon, who wore the ribbon of the Legion of Honor, was fat and burly, as beseems a fashionable physician, with a patriarchal air, his hair thick and long, a prominent brow, the frame of a hard worker, and the calm expression of a philosopher. This somewhat prosaic personality set off his more frivolous companion to advantage.

The two great men remained unrecognized during a whole morning at the inn where they had put up, and it was only by chance that Monsieur de Clagny heard of their arrival. Madame de La Baudraye, in despair at this, dispatched Gatien Boirouge, who had no vineyards, to beg the two gentlemen to spend a few days at the Castle of Anzy. For the last year Dinah had played the chatelaine, and spent the winter only at La Baudraye. Monsieur Gravier, the public prosecutor,

the presiding judge, and Gatien Boirouge combined to give a banquet to the two great men, to meet the literary personages of the town.

On hearing that the beautiful Madame de La Baudraye was Jan Diaz, the Parisians went to spend three days at Anzy, fetched in a sort of wagonette driven by Gatien himself. The young man, under a genuine illusion, spoke of Madame de La Baudraye not only as the handsomest woman in those parts, a woman so superior that she might give George Sand a qualm, but as a woman who would produce a great sensation in Paris. Hence the extreme though suppressed astonishment of Doctor Bianchon and the waggish journalist when they beheld, on the garden steps of Anzy, a lady dressed in thin black cashmere with a deep tucker, in effect like a riding-habit cut short, for they quite understood the pretentiousness of such extreme simplicity. Dinah also wore a black velvet cap, like that in the portrait of Raphael, and below it her hair fell in thick curls. This attire showed off a rather pretty figure, fine eyes, and handsome eyelids somewhat faded by the weariful life that has been described. In Le Berry the singularity of this *artistic* costume was a cloak for the romantic affectations of the Superior Woman.

On seeing the affectations of their too amiable hostess—which were, indeed, affectations of soul and mind—the friends glanced at each other and put on a deeply serious expression to listen to Madame de La Baudraye, who made them a set speech of thanks for coming to cheer the monotony of her days. Dinah walked her guests round and round the lawn, ornamented with large vases of flowers, which lay in front of the Castle of Anzy.

“How is it,” said Lousteau, the practical joker, “that so handsome a woman as yourself, and apparently so superior, should have remained buried in the country? What do you do to make life endurable?”

“Ah! that is the crux,” said the lady. “It is unendur-

able. Utter despair or dull resignation—there is no third alternative; that is the arid soil in which our existence is rooted, and on which a thousand stagnant ideas fall; they cannot fertilize the ground, but they supply food for the etiolated flowers of our desert souls. Never believe in indifference! Indifference is either despair or resignation. Then each woman takes up the pursuit which, according to her character, seems to promise some amusement. Some rush into jam-making and washing, household management, the rural joys of the vintage or the harvest, bottling fruit, embroidering handkerchiefs, the cares of motherhood, the intrigues of a country town. Others torment a much-enduring piano, which, at the end of seven years, sounds like an old kettle, and ends its asthmatic life at the Castle of Anzy. Some pious dames talk over the different brands of the Word of God—the Abbé Fritaud as compared with the Abbé Guinard. They play cards in the evening, dance with the same partners for twelve years running, in the same rooms, at the same dates. This delightful life is varied by solemn walks on the mall, visits of politeness among the women, who ask each other where they bought their gowns.

“Conversation is bounded on the South by remarks on the intrigues lying hidden under the stagnant water of provincial life, on the North by proposed marriages, on the West by jealousies, and on the East by sour remarks.

“And so,” she went on, striking an attitude, “you see a woman wrinkled at nine-and-twenty, ten years before the time fixed by the rules of Doctor Bianchon, a woman whose skin is ruined at an early age, who turns as yellow as a quince when she is yellow at all—we have seen some turn green. When we have reached that point, we try to justify our normal condition; then we turn and rend the terrible passions of Paris with teeth as sharp as rats’ teeth. We have Puritan women here, sour enough to tear the laces of Parisian finery, and eat out all the poetry of your Parisian beauties, who undermine

the happiness of others while they cry up their walnuts and rancid bacon, glorify this squalid mouse-hole, and the dingy color and conventual smell of our delightful life at Sancerre."

"I admire such courage, madame," said Bianchon. "When we have to endure such misfortunes, it is well to have the wit to make a virtue of necessity."

Amazed at the brilliant move by which Dinah thus placed provincial life at the mercy of her guests, in anticipation of their sarcasms, Gatien Boirouge nudged Lousteau's elbow, with a glance and a smile, which said:

"Well! did I say too much?"

"But, madame," said Lousteau, "you are proving that we are still in Paris. I shall steal this gem of description; it will be worth ten francs to me in an article."

"Oh, monsieur!" she retorted, "never trust provincial women."

"And why not?" said Lousteau.

Madame de La Baudraye was wily enough—an innocent form of cunning, to be sure—to show the two Parisians, one of whom she would choose to be her conqueror, the snare into which he would fall, reflecting that she would have the upper hand at the moment when he should cease to see it.

"When you first come," said she, "you laugh at us. Then when you have forgotten the impression of Paris brilliancy, and see us in our own sphere, you pay court to us, if only as a pastime. And you, who are famous for your past passions, will be the object of attentions which will flatter you. Then take care!" cried Dinah, with a coquettish gesture, raising herself above provincial absurdities and Lousteau's irony by her own sarcastic speech. "When a poor, little country-bred woman has an eccentric passion for some superior man, some Parisian who has wandered into the provinces, it is to her something more than a sentiment; she makes it her occupation and part of all her life. There is nothing more dangerous than the attachment of such a woman; she compares, she

studies, she reflects, she dreams ; and she will not give up her dream, she thinks still of the man she loves when he has ceased to think of her.

"Now one of the catastrophes that weigh most heavily on a woman in the provinces is that abrupt termination of her passion which is so often seen in England. In the country, a life under minute observation as keen as an Indian's compels a woman either to keep on the rails or to start aside like a steam engine wrecked by an obstacle. The strategies of love, the coquetting which form half the composition of a Parisian woman, are utterly unknown here."

"That is true," said Lousteau. "There is in a country-bred woman's heart a store of surprises, as in some toys."

"Dear me ! " Dinah went on, "a woman will have spoken to you three times in the course of a winter, and, without your knowing it, you will be lodged in her heart. Then comes a picnic, an excursion, what not, and all is said—or, if you prefer it, all is done ! This conduct, which seems odd to unobserving persons, is really very natural. A poet, such as you are, or a philosopher, an observer, like Doctor Bianchon, instead of vilifying the provincial woman and believing her depraved, would be able to guess the wonderful unrevealed poetry, every chapter, in short, of the sweet romance of which the last phase falls to the benefit of some happy sub-lieutenant or some provincial bigwig."

"The provincial women I have met in Paris," said Lousteau, "were, in fact, rapid in their proceedings——"

"My word, they are strange," said the lady, giving a significant shrug of her shoulders.

"They are like the playgoers who book for the second performance, feeling sure that the piece will not fail," replied the journalist.

"And what is the cause of all these woes ? " asked Bianchon.

"Paris is the monster that brings us grief," replied the

Superior Woman. "The evil is seven leagues round, and devastates the whole land. Provincial life is not self-existent. It is only when a nation is divided into fifty minor states that each can have a physiognomy of its own, and then a woman reflects the glory of the sphere wherein she reigns. This social phenomenon, I am told, may be seen in Italy, Switzerland, and Germany; but in France, as in every country where there is but one capital, a dead-level of manners must necessarily result from centralization."

"Then you would say that manners could only recover their individuality and native distinction by the formation of a federation of French states into one empire?" said Lousteau.

"That is hardly to be wished, for France would have to conquer too many countries," said Bianchon.

"This misfortune is unknown to England," exclaimed Dinah. "London does not exert such tyranny as that by which Paris oppresses France—for which, indeed, French ingenuity will at last find a remedy; however, it has a worse disease in its vile hypocrisy, which is a far greater evil!"

"The English aristocracy," said Lousteau, hastening to put a word in, for he foresaw a Byronic paragraph, "has the advantage over ours of assimilating every form of superiority; it lives in the midst of magnificent parks; it is in London for no more than two months. It lives in the country, flourishing there, and making it flourish."

"Yes," said Madame de la Baudraye, "London is the capital of trade and speculation, and the centre of government. The aristocracy hold a 'meet' there for sixty days only; it gives and takes the passwords of the day, looks in on the legislative cookery, reviews the girls to marry, the carriages to be sold, exchanges greetings, and is away again; and is so far from amusing that it cannot bear itself for more than the few days known as 'the season.'"

"Hence," said Lousteau, hoping to stop this nimble tongue by an epigram, "in perfidious Albion, as the 'Constitutionnel'

has it, you may happen to meet a charming woman in any part of the kingdom."

"But charming *Englishwomen*!" replied Madame de la Baudraye with a smile. "Here is my mother, I will introduce you," said she, seeing Madame Piédefer coming toward them.

Having introduced the two Paris lions to the ambitious skeleton that called itself woman under the name of Madame Piédefer—a tall, lean personage with a red face, teeth that were doubtfully genuine, and hair that was undoubtedly dyed, Dinah left her visitors to themselves for a few minutes.

"Well," said Gatien to Lousteau, "what do you think of her?"

"I think that the clever woman of Sancerre is simply the greatest chatterbox," replied the journalist.

"A woman who wants to see you deputy!" cried Gatien. "An angel!"

"Forgive me, I forgot you were in love with her," said Lousteau. "Forgive the cynicism of an old scamp. Ask Bianchon; I have no illusions left. I see things as they are. The woman has evidently dried up her mother like a partridge left to roast at too fierce a fire."

Gatien de Boirouge contrived to let Madame de La Baudraye know what the journalist had said of her in the course of the dinner, which was copious, not to say splendid, and the lady took care not to talk too much while it was proceeding. This lack of conversation betrayed Gatien's indiscretion. Étienne tried to regain his footing, but all Dinah's advances were directed to Bianchon.

However, half-way through the evening, the baroness was gracious to Lousteau again. Have you never observed what great meannesses may be committed for small ends? Thus the haughty Dinah, who would not sacrifice herself for a fool, who in the depths of the country led such a wretched life of struggles, of suppressed rebellion, of unuttered poetry, who to

get away from Lousteau had climbed the highest and steepest peak of her scorn, and who would not have come down if she had seen the sham Byron at her feet, suddenly stepped off it as she recollected her album.

Madame de La Baudraye had caught the mania for autographs; she possessed an oblong volume which deserved the name of album better than most, as two-thirds of the pages were still blank. The Baronne de Fontaine, who had kept it for three months, had with great difficulty obtained a line from Rossini, six bars written by Meyerbeer, the four lines that Victor Hugo writes in every album, a verse from Lamartine, a few words from Béranger: *Calypto ne pouvait se consoler du départ d'Ulysse* (the first words of "Télémaque") written by George Sand, Scribe's famous lines on the Umbrella, a sentence from Charles Nodier, an outline of distance by Jules Dupré, the signature of David d'Angers, and three notes written by Hector Berlioz. Monsieur de Clagny, during a visit to Paris, added a song by Lacenaire—a much-coveted autograph, two lines from Fieschi, and an extremely short note from Napoleon, which were pasted on to pages of the album. Then Monsieur Gravier, in the course of a tour, had persuaded Mademoiselle Mars to write her name on this album, with Mademoiselles Georges, Taglioni, and Grisi, and some distinguished actors, such as Frédérick Lemaître, Monrose, Bouffé, Rubini, Lablache, Nourrit, and Arnal; for he knew a set of old fellows brought up in the seraglio, as they phrased it, who did him this favor.

This beginning of a collection was all the more precious to Dinah because she was the only person for ten leagues round who owned an album. Within the last two years, however, several young ladies had acquired such books, in which they made their friends and acquaintances write more or less absurd quotations or sentiments. You who spend your lives in collecting autographs, simple and happy souls, like Dutch tulip fanciers, you will excuse Dinah when, in her fear of not keep-

ing her guests more than two days, she begged Bianchon to enrich the volume she handed to him with a few lines of his writing.

The doctor made Lousteau smile by showing him this sentence on the first page—

“What makes the populace dangerous is that it has in its pocket an absolution for every crime.”

“J. B. DE CLAGNY.”

“We will second the man who is brave enough to plead in favor of the Monarchy,” Desplein’s great pupil whispered to Lousteau, and he wrote below—

“The distinction between Napoleon and a water-carrier is evident only to Society; Nature takes no account of it. Thus Democracy, which resists inequality, constantly appeals to Nature.

“H. BIANCHON.”

“Ah!” cried Dinah, amazed, “you rich men take a gold-piece out of your purse as poor men bring out a farthing. I do not know,” she went on, turning to Lousteau, “whether it is taking an unfair advantage of a guest to hope for a few lines——”

“Nay, madame, you flatter me. Bianchon is a great man, but I am too insignificant! Twenty years hence my name will be more difficult to identify than that of the public prosecutor whose axiom, written in your album, will designate him as an obscurer Montesquieu. And I should want at least twenty-four hours to improvise some sufficiently bitter reflections, for I could only describe what I feel.”

“I wish you needed a fortnight,” said Madame de La Baudraye graciously, as she handed him the book. “I should keep you here all the longer.”

At five next morning all the party in the Anzy manor-house were astir, little La Baudraye having arranged a day's sport for the Parisians—less for their pleasure than to gratify his own conceit. He was delighted to make them walk over the twelve hundred acres of waste land that he was intending to reclaim, an undertaking that would cost some hundred thousand francs, but which might yield an increase of thirty to sixty thousand francs a year in the returns of the estate of Anzy.

"Do you know why the public prosecutor has not come out with us?" asked young Gatien Boirouge of Monsieur Gravier.

"Why, he told us that he was obliged to sit to-day; the minor cases are before the court," replied the other.

"And did you believe that?" cried Gatien. "Well, my papa said to me: 'Monsieur Lebas will not join you early, for Monsieur de Clagny has begged him as his deputy to sit for him!'"

"Indeed!" said Gravier, changing countenance. "And Monsieur de La Baudraye is gone to La Charité!"

"But why do you meddle in such matters?" said Bianchon to Gatien.

"Horace is right," said Lousteau. "I cannot imagine why you trouble your heads so much about each other; you waste your time in frivolities."

Horace Bianchon looked at Étienne Lousteau, as much as to say that newspaper epigrams and the satire of the "funny column" were incomprehensible at Sancerre.

On reaching a copse, Monsieur Gravier left the two great men and Gatien, under the guidance of a keeper, to make their way through a little ravine.

"Well, we must wait for Monsieur Gravier," said Bianchon, when they had reached a clearing.

"You may be a great physician," said Gatien, "but you are ignorant of provincial life. You mean to wait for Mon-

sieur Gravier? By this time he is running like a hare, in spite of his little round stomach; he is within twenty minutes of Anzy by now——” Gatien looked at his watch. “Good! he will be just in time.”

“Where?”

“At the castle for breakfast,” replied Gatien. “Do you suppose I could rest easy if Madame de La Baudraye were alone with Monsieur de Clagny? There are two of them now; they will keep an eye on each other. Dinah will be well guarded.”

“Ah, ha! Then Madame de La Baudraye has not yet made up her mind?” said Lousteau.

“So mamma thinks. For my part, I am afraid that Monsieur de Clagny has at last succeeded in bewitching Madame de La Baudraye. If he has been able to show her that he had any chance of putting on the robes of the keeper of the seals, he may have hidden his moleskin complexion, his terrible eyes, his touzled mane, his voice like a hoarse crier’s, his bony figure, like that of a starveling poet, and have assumed all the charms of Adonis. If Dinah sees Monsieur de Clagny as attorney-general, she may see him as a handsome youth. Eloquence has great privileges. Beside, Madame de La Baudraye is full of ambition. She does not like Sancerre, and dreams of the glories of Paris.”

“But what interest have you in all this?” said Lousteau. “If she is in love with the public prosecutor! Ah! you think she will not love him for long, and you hope to succeed him.”

“You who live in Paris,” said Gatien, “meet as many different women as there are days in the year. But at Sancerre, where there are not half a dozen, and where, of those six, five set up for the most extravagant virtue, when the handsomest of them all keeps you at an infinite distance by looks as scornful as though she were of the blood royal, a young man of two-and-twenty may surely be allowed to make a guess

at her secrets, since she must then treat him with some consideration."

"Consideration! So that is what you call it in these parts?" said the journalist with a smile.

"I should suppose Madame de La Baudraye to have too much good taste to trouble her head about that ugly ape," said Bianchon.

"Horace," said Lousteau, "look here, O learned interpreter of human nature, let us lay a trap for the public prosecutor; we shall be doing our friend Gatien a service and get a laugh out of it. I do not love public prosecutors."

"You have a keen intuition of destiny," said Horace. "But what can we do?"

"Well, after dinner we will tell sundry little anecdotes of wives caught out by their husbands, killed, murdered under the most terrible circumstances. Then we shall see the faces that Madame de La Baudraye and de Clagny will make."

"Not amiss!" said Bianchon; "one or the other must surely, by look or gesture——"

"I know a newspaper editor," Lousteau went on, addressing Gatien, "who, anxious to forefend a grievous fate, will take no stories but such as tell the tale of lovers burned, hewn, pounded, or cut to pieces; of wives boiled, fried, or baked; he takes them to his wife to read, hoping that sheer fear will keep her faithful—satisfied with that humble alternative, poor man! 'You see, my dear, to what the smallest error may lead you!' says he, epitomizing Arnolfe's address to Agnes."

"Madame de La Baudraye is quite guiltless; this youth sees double," said Bianchon. "Madame Pièdefer seems to me far too pious to invite her daughter's lover to the Castle of Anzy. Madame de La Baudraye would have to hoodwink her mother, her husband, her maid, and her mother's maid; that is too much to do. I acquit her."

"With the more reason because her husband never 'quits her,'" said Gatien, laughing at his own wit.

"We can easily remember two or three stories that will make Dinah quake," said Lousteau. "Young man—and you too, Bianchon—let me beg you to maintain a stern demeanor; be thorough diplomatists, an easy manner without exaggeration, and watch the faces of the two criminals, you know, without seeming to do so—out of the corner of your eye, or in a glass, on the sly. This morning we will hunt the hare, this evening we will harry the public prosecutor."

The evening began with a triumph for Lousteau, who returned the album to the lady with this elegy written in it:

SPLEEN.

You ask for verse from me, the feeble prey
Of this self-seeking world, a waif and stray
 With none to whom to cling;
From me—unhappy, purblind, hopeless devil!
Who e'en in what is good see only evil
 In any earthly thing!

This page, the pastime of a dame so fair,
May not reflect the shadow of my care,
 For all things have their place.
Of love, to ladies bright, the poet sings,
Of joy, and balls, and dress, and dainty things—
 Nay, or of God and Grace.

It were a bitter jest to bid the pen
Of one so worn with life, so hating men,
 Depict a scene of joy.
Would you exult in sight to one born blind,
Or—cruel! of a mother's love remind
 Some hapless orphan boy?

When cold despair has gripped a heart still fond,
When there is no young heart that will respond
 To it in love, the future is a lie.
If there is none to weep, when he is sad,
And share his woe, a man were better dead!—
 And so I soon must die.

Give me your pity ! often I blaspheme
 The sacred name of God. Does it not seem
 That I was born in vain ?
 Why should I bless Him ? Or why thank Him, since
 He might have made me handsome, rich, a prince—
 And I am poor and plain ?

ÉTIENNE LOUSTEAU.

September, 1836, Château d'Anzy.

“And you have written those verses since yesterday?” cried Clagny in a suspicious tone.

“Dear me, yes, as I was following the game ; it is only too evident ? I would gladly have done something better for madame.”

“The verses are exquisite !” cried Dinah, casting up her eyes to heaven.

“They are, alas ! the expression of a too genuine feeling,” replied Lousteau, in a tone of deep dejection.

The reader will, of course, have guessed that the journalist had stored these lines in his memory for ten years at least, for he had written them at the time of the Restoration in disgust at being unable to get on. Madame de la Baudraye gazed at him with such pity as the woes of genius inspire ; and Monsieur de Clagny, who caught her expression, turned in hatred against this sham “*Jeune Malade*”* (young invalid). He sat down to backgammon with the curé of Sancerre. The presiding judge’s son was so extremely obliging as to place a lamp near the two players in such a way as that the light fell full on Madame de la Baudraye, who took up her work ; she was embroidering in coarse wool a wicket-plait paper-basket. The three conspirators sat close at hand.

“For whom are you decorating that pretty basket, Madame ?” said Lousteau. “For some charity lottery, perhaps ?”

“No,” said she, “I think there is too much display in charity done to the sound of a trumpet.”

* The name of an Elegy written by Millevoye.

"You are very indiscreet," said Monsieur Gravier.

"Can there be any indiscretion," said Lousteau, "in inquiring who the happy mortal may be in whose room that basket is to stand?"

"There is no happy mortal in the case," said Dinah; "it is for Monsieur de La Baudraye."

The public prosecutor looked slyly at Madame de La Baudraye and her work, as if he had said to himself: "I have lost my paper-basket!"

"Why, madame, may we not think him happy in having a lovely wife, happy in her decorating his paper-baskets so charmingly? The colors are red and black, like Robin Good-fellow. If ever I marry, I only hope that, twelve years after, my wife's embroidered baskets may still be for me."

"And why should they not be for you?" said the lady, fixing her fine gray eyes, full of invitation, on Étienne's face.

"Parisians believe in nothing," said the lawyer bitterly. "The virtue of women is doubted above all things with terrible insolence. Yes, for some time past the books you have written, you Paris authors, your farces, your dramas, all your atrocious literature turn on adultery——"

"Come, come, Monsieur the Public Prosecutor," retorted Étienne, laughing, "I left you to play your game in peace, I did not attack you, and here you are bringing an indictment against me. On my honor as a journalist, I have launched above a hundred articles against the writers you speak of; but I confess that in attacking them it was to attempt something like criticism. Be just; if you condemn them, you must condemn Homer, whose 'Iliad' turns on Helen of Troy; you must condemn Milton's 'Paradise Lost.' Eve and her serpent seem to me a pretty little case of symbolical adultery; you must suppress the Psalms of David, inspired by the highly adulterous love affairs of that Louis XIV. of Judah; you must make a bonfire of 'Mithridate,' 'le Tartuffe,' 'l'École des Femmes,' 'Phèdre,' 'Andromaque,' 'le Mariage de Figaro,'

Dante's 'Inferno,' Petrarch's Sonnets, all the works of Jean-Jacques Rousseau, the romances of the Middle Ages, the History of France and of Rome, etc., etc. Excepting Bossuet's 'Histoire des Variations' and Pascal's 'Provinciales,' I do not think there are many books left to read if you insist on eliminating all those in which illicit love is mentioned."

"Much loss that would be!" said Monsieur de Clagny.

Étienne, nettled by the superior air assumed by Monsieur de Clagny, wanted to infuriate him by one of those cold-drawn jests which consist in defending an opinion in which we have no belief, simply to rouse the wrath of a poor man who argues in good faith; a regular journalist's pleasantry.

"If we take up the political attitude into which you would force yourself," he went on, without heeding the lawyer's remark, "and assume the part of public prosecutor of all the ages—for every Government has its public ministry—well, the Catholic religion is infected at its fountain-head by a startling instance of illegal union. In the opinion of King Herod, and of Pilate as representing the Roman Empire, Joseph's wife figured as an adulteress, since, by her own avowal, Joseph was not the father of Jesus. The heathen judge could no more recognize the immaculate conception than you yourself would admit the possibility of such a miracle if a new religion should nowadays be preached as based on a similar mystery. Do you suppose that a judge and jury in a police court would give credence to the operation of the Holy Ghost! And yet who can venture to assert that God will never again redeem mankind? Is it any better now than it was under Tiberius?"

"Your argument is blasphemy," said Monsieur de Clagny.

"I grant it," said the journalist, "but not with malicious intent. You cannot suppress historical fact. In my opinion, Pilate, when he sentenced Jesus, and Anytus—who spoke for the aristocratic party at Athens—when he insisted on the death of Socrates, both represented established social interests

which held themselves legitimate, invested with coöperative powers, and obliged to defend themselves. Pilate and Anytus in their time were not less logical than the public prosecutors who demanded the heads of the sergeants of La Rochelle; who, at this day, are guillotining the republicans who take up arms against the throne as established by the revolution of July, and the innovators who aim at upsetting society for their own advantage under pretense of organizing it on a better footing. In the eyes of the great families of Greece and Rome, Socrates and Jesus were criminals; to those ancient aristocracies their opinions were akin to those of the Mountain; and if their followers had been victorious, they would have produced a little 'ninety-three' in the Roman Empire or in Attica."

"To what are you trying to come, monsieur?" asked the lawyer.

"To adultery! For thus, monsieur, a Buddhist as he smokes his pipe may very well assert that the Christian religion is founded in adultery; as we believe that Mahomet is an impostor; that his Koran is an epitome of the Old Testament and the Gospels; and that God never had the least intention of constituting that camel-driver His prophet."

"If there were many men like you in France—and there are more than enough, unfortunately—all government would be impossible."

"And there would be no religion at all," said Madame Piédefer, who had been making strangely wry faces all through this discussion.

"You are paining them very much," said Bianchon to Lousteau in an undertone. "Do not talk of religion; you are saying things that are enough to upset them."

"If I were a writer or a romancer," said Monsieur Gravier, "I should take the side of the luckless husbands. I, who have seen many things, and strange things, too, know that among the ranks of deceived husbands there are some whose

attitude is not devoid of energy, men who, at a crisis, can be very dramatic, to use one of your words, monsieur," he said, addressing Étienne.

"You are very right, my dear Monsieur Gravier," said Lousteau. "I never thought that deceived husbands were ridiculous; on the contrary, I think highly of them——"

"Do you not think a husband's confidence a sublime thing?" said Bianchon. "He believes in his wife, he does not suspect her, he trusts her implicitly. But if he is so weak as to trust her, you make game of him; if he is jealous and suspicious, you hate him; what, then, I ask you, is the happy medium for a man of spirit?"

"If Monsieur de Clagny had not just expressed such vehement disapproval of the immorality of stories in which the matrimonial compact is violated, I could tell you of a husband's revenge," said Lousteau.

Monsieur de Clagny threw the dice with a convulsive jerk, and dared not look up at the journalist.

"A story, from you!" cried Madame de La Baudraye. "I should hardly have dared to hope for such a treat——"

"It is not my story, madame; I am not clever enough to invent such a tragedy. It was told me—and how delightfully!—by one of our greatest writers, the finest literary musician of our day, Charles Nodier."

"Well, tell it," said Dinah. "I never met Monsieur Nodier, so you have no comparison to fear."

"Not long after the 18th Brumaire," Etienne began, "there was, as you know, a call to arms in Brittany and la Vendée. The First Consul, anxious before all things for peace in France, opened negotiations with the rebel chiefs, and took energetic military measures; but, while combining his plans of campaign with the insinuating charm of Italian diplomacy, he also set the machiavellian springs of the police in movement, Fouché then being at its head. And none of these means were superfluous to stifle the fire of war then blazing in the West.

“At this time a young man of the Maillé family was dispatched by the Chouans from Brittany to Saumur, to open communications between certain magnates of that town and its environs and the leaders of the Royalist party. The envoy was, in fact, arrested on the very day he landed—for he traveled by boat, disguised as a master mariner. However, as a man of practical intelligence, he had calculated all the risks of the undertaking; his passport and papers were all in order, and the men told off to take him were afraid of blundering.

“The Chevalier de Beauvoir—I now remember his name—had studied his part well; he appealed to the family whose name he had borrowed, persisted in his false address, and stood his examination so boldly that he would have been set at large but for the blind belief that the spies had in their instructions, which were unfortunately only too minute. In this dilemma the authorities were more ready to risk an arbitrary act than to let a man escape to whose capture the Minister attached great importance. In those days of liberty the agents of the powers in authority cared little enough for what we now regard as *legal*. The chevalier was therefore imprisoned provisionally, until the superior officials should come to some decision as to his identity. He had not long to wait for it; orders were given to guard the prisoner closely in spite of his denials.

“The Chevalier de Beauvoir was next transferred, in obedience to further orders, to the Castle of l’Escarpe, a name which sufficiently indicates its situation. This fortress, perched on very high rocks, has precipices for its trenches; it is reached on all sides by steep and dangerous paths; and, like every ancient castle, its principal gate has a drawbridge over a wide moat. The commandant of this prison, delighted to have charge of a man of family whose manners were most agreeable, who expressed himself well, and seemed highly educated, received the chevalier as a godsend; he offered him the free-

dom of the place on parole, that they might together the better defy its dullness. The prisoner was more than content.

“Beauvoir was a loyal gentleman, but, unfortunately, he was also a very handsome youth. He had attractive features, a dashing air, a pleasing address, and extraordinary strength. Well made, active, full of enterprise, and loving danger, he would have made an admirable leader of guerrilla, and was the very man for the part. The commandant gave his prisoner the most comfortable room, entertained him at his table, and at first had nothing but praise for the Vendéen. This officer was a Corsican and married; his wife was pretty and charming, and he thought her, perhaps, not to be trusted—at any rate, he was as jealous as a Corsican and a rather ill-looking soldier may be. The lady took a fancy to Beauvoir, and he found her very much to his taste; perhaps they loved! Love in a prison is quick work. Did they commit some imprudence? Was the sentiment they entertained something warmer than the superficial gallantry which is almost a duty of men toward women?

“Beauvoir never fully explained this rather obscure episode of the story; it is at least certain that the commandant thought himself justified in treating his prisoner with excessive severity. Beauvoir was placed in the dungeon, fed on black bread and cold water, and fettered in accordance with the time-honored traditions of the treatment lavished on captives. His cell, under the fortress-yard, was vaulted with hard stone, the walls were of desperate thickness; the tower overlooked the precipice.

“When the luckless man had convinced himself of the impossibility of escape, he fell into those day-dreams which are at once the comfort and the crowning despair of prisoners. He gave himself up to the trifles which in such cases seem so important; he counted the hours and the days; he studied the melancholy trade of being prisoner; he became absorbed in himself, and learned the value of air and sunshine; then,

at the end of a fortnight, he was attacked by that terrible malady, that fever for liberty, which drives prisoners to those heroic efforts of which the prodigious achievements seem to us impossible, though true, and which my friend the doctor" (and he turned to Bianchon) "would perhaps ascribe to some unknown forces too recondite for his physiological analysis to detect, some mysteries of the human will of which the obscurity baffles science."

Bianchon shook his head in negation.

"Beauvoir was eating his heart out, for death alone could set him free. One morning the turnkey, whose duty it was to bring him his food, instead of leaving him when he had given him his meagre pittance, stood with his arms folded, looking at him with strange meaning. Conversation between them was generally brief, and the warder never began it. The chevalier was therefore greatly surprised when the man said to him: 'Of course, monsieur, you know your own business when you insist on being always called Monsieur Lebrun, or Citizen Lebrun. It is no concern of mine; ascertaining your name is no part of my duty. It is all the same to me whether you call yourself Peter or Paul. If every man minds his own business, the cows will not stray. At the same time, *I* know,' he said, with a wink, 'that you are Monsieur Charles-Félix-Théodore, Chevalier de Beauvoir, and cousin to Madame la Duchesse de Maillé. Heh?' he added after a short silence, during which he looked at his prisoner.

"Beauvoir, seeing that he was safe under lock and key, did not imagine that his position could be any the worse if his real name were known.

"'Well, and supposing I were the Chevalier de Beauvoir, what should I gain by that?' said he.

"'Oh, there is everything to be gained by it,' replied the gaoler in an undertone. 'I have been paid to help you to get away; but wait a minute! If I were suspected in the smallest degree, I should be shot out of hand. So I have said that I

will do no more in the matter than will just earn the money. Look here,' said he, taking a small file out of his pocket, 'this is your key; with this you can cut through one of your bars. By the mass, but it will not be an easy job,' he went on, glancing at the narrow loophole that let daylight into the dungeon.

"It was in a splayed recess under the deep cornice that ran round the top of the tower, between the brackets that supported the embrasures.

"'Monsieur,' said the man, 'you must take care to saw through the iron low enough to get your body through.'

"'I will get through, never fear,' said the prisoner.

"'But high enough to leave a stanchion to fasten a cord to,' the warder went on.

"'And where is the cord?' asked Beauvoir.

"'Here,' said the man, throwing down a knotted rope. 'It is made of raveled linen, that you may be supposed to have contrived it yourself, and it is long enough. When you have got to the bottom knot, let yourself drop gently, and the rest you must manage for yourself. You will probably find a carriage somewhere in the neighborhood, and friends looking out for you. But I know nothing about that. I need not remind you that there is a man-at-arms to the right of the tower. You will take care, of course, to choose a dark night, and wait till the sentinel is asleep. You must take your chance of being shot; but——'

"'All right! All right! At least I shall not rot here,' cried the young man.

"'Well, that may happen nevertheless,' replied the gaoler, with a stupid expression.

"Beauvoir thought this was merely one of the aimless remarks that such folk indulge in. The hope of freedom filled him with such joy that he could not be troubled to consider the words of a man who was no more than a better sort of peasant. He set to work at once, and had filed the bars

through in the course of the day. Fearing a visit from the governor, he stopped up the breaches with bread-crumbs rubbed in rust to make it look like the iron; he hid his rope, and waited for a favorable night with the intensity of anticipation, the deep anguish of soul that makes a prisoner's life dramatic.

"At last, one murky night, an autumn night, he finished cutting through the bars, tied the cord firmly to the stump, and perched himself on the sill outside, holding on by one hand to the piece of iron remaining. Then he waited for the darkest hour of the night, when the sentinels would probably be asleep; this would be not long before dawn. He knew the hours of their rounds, the length of each watch, every detail with which prisoners, almost involuntarily, become familiar. He waited till the moment when one of the men-at-arms had spent two-thirds of his watch and gone into his box for shelter from the fog. Then, feeling sure that the chances were at the best for his escape, he let himself down knot by knot, hanging between earth and sky, and clinging to his rope with the strength of a giant. All was well. At the last knot but one, just as he was about to let himself drop, a prudent impulse led him to feel for the ground with his feet, and he found no footing. The predicament was awkward for a man bathed in sweat, tired, and perplexed, and in a position where his life was at stake on even chances. He was about to risk it, when a trivial incident stopped him; his hat fell off; happily, he listened for the noise it must make in striking the ground, and he heard not a sound.

"The prisoner felt vaguely suspicious as to this state of affairs. He began to wonder whether the commandant had not laid a trap for him—but if so, why? Torn by doubts, he almost resolved to postpone the attempt till another night. At any rate, he would wait for the first gleam of day, when it would still not be impossible to escape. His great strength enabled him to climb up again to his window; still, he was almost exhausted by the time he gained the sill, where he



HE PERCEIVED — THAT THERE WAS A LITTLE INTERVAL
OF A HUNDRED FEET BETWEEN THE LOWEST KNOT
AND THE POINTED ROCKS BELOW.



crouched on the lookout, exactly like a cat on the parapet of a gutter. Before long, by the pale light of dawn, he perceived as he waved the rope that there was a little interval of a hundred feet between the lowest knot and the pointed rocks below.

“ ‘Thank you, my friend the governor!’ said he, with characteristic coolness. Then, after a brief meditation on this skillfully planned revenge, he thought it wise to return to his cell.

“ He laid his outer clothes conspicuously on the bed, left the rope outside to make it seem that he had fallen, and hid himself behind the door to await the arrival of the treacherous turnkey, arming himself with one of the iron bars he had filed out. The gaoler, who returned rather earlier than usual to secure the dead man’s leavings, opened the door, whistling as he came in; but when he was at arm’s length, Beauvoir hit him such a tremendous blow on the head that the wretch fell in a heap without a cry; the bar had cracked his skull.

“ The chevalier hastily stripped him and put on his clothes, mimicked his walk, and, thanks to the early hour and the undoubting confidence of the warders of the great gate, he walked out and away.”

It did not seem to strike either the lawyer or Madame de La Baudraye that there was in this narrative the least illusion that should apply to them. Those in the little plot looked inquiringly at each other, evidently surprised at the perfect coolness of the two supposed lovers.

“ Oh! I can tell you a better story than that,” said Bianchon.

“ Let us hear,” said the audience, at a sign from Lousteau, conveying that Bianchon had a reputation as a story-teller.

Among the stock of narratives he had in store, for every clever man has a fund of anecdotes as Madame de La Baudraye had a collection of phrases, the doctor chose that which

is known as "La Grande Bretèche,"* and is so famous, indeed, that it was put on the stage at the *Gymnase-Dramatique* under the title of "Valentine." So it is not necessary to repeat it here, though it was then new to the inhabitants of the Castle of Anzy. And it was told with the same finish of gesture and tone which had won such praise for Bianchon when at *Mademoiselle des Touches'* supper-party he had told it for the first time. The final picture of the Spanish grandee, starved to death where he stood in the cupboard walled up by Madame de Merret's husband, and that husband's last word as he replied to his wife's entreaty, "You swore on that crucifix that there was no one in the closet!" produced their full effect.

There was a silent minute, a pause highly flattering to Bianchon.

"Do you know, gentlemen," said Madame de La Baudraye, "love must be a mighty thing that it can tempt a woman to put herself in such a position?"

"I, who have certainly seen some strange things in the course of my life," said Gravier, "was cognizant in Spain of an adventure of the same kind."

"You come forward after two great performers," said Madame de La Baudraye, with coquettish flattery, as she glanced at the two Parisians. "But never mind—proceed."

"Some little time after his entry into Madrid," said the receiver-general, "the Grand Duke of Berg invited the magnates of the capital to an entertainment given to the newly conquered city by the French army. In spite of the splendor of the affair, the Spaniards were not very cheerful; their ladies hardly danced at all, and most of the company sat down to cards. The gardens of the duke's palace were so brilliantly illuminated that the ladies could walk about in as perfect safety as in broad daylight. The fête was of imperial magnificence. Nothing was grudged to give the Spaniards a

* In volume of "The Lily of the Valley."

high idea of the Emperor, if they were to measure him by the standard of his officers.

“In an arbor near the house, between one and two in the morning, a party of French officers were discussing the chances of war, and the not too hopeful outlook prognosticated by the conduct of the Spaniards present at that grand ball.

“‘I can only tell you,’ said the surgeon-major of the company of which I was paymaster, ‘I applied formally to Prince Murat only yesterday to be recalled. Without being afraid exactly of leaving my bones in the Peninsula, I would rather dress the wounds made by our worthy neighbors the Germans. Their weapons do not run quite so deep into the body as these Castilian daggers. Beside, a certain dread of Spain is, with me, a sort of superstition. From my earliest youth I have read Spanish books, and a heap of gloomy romances and tales of adventure in this country have given me a serious prejudice against its manners and customs.

“‘Well, now, since my arrival in Madrid, I have already been, not indeed the hero, but the accomplice of a dangerous intrigue, as dark and mysterious as any romance by Lady [Mrs.] Radcliffe. I am apt to attend to my presentiments, and I am off to-morrow. Murat will not refuse me leave, for, thanks to our varied services, we always have influential friends.’

“‘Since you mean to cut your stick, tell us what’s up,’ said an old Republican colonel, who cared not a rap for Imperial gentility and choice language.

“The surgeon-major looked about him cautiously, as if to make sure who were his audience, and, being satisfied that no Spaniard was within hearing, he said:

“‘We are none but Frenchmen—then, with pleasure, Colonel Hulot. About six days since, I was quietly going home, at about eleven at night, after leaving General Montcornet, whose hotel is but a few yards from mine. We had come away together from the quartermaster-general’s, where

we had played rather high at *bouillotte*. Suddenly, at the corner of a narrow side-street, two strangers, or rather, two demons, rushed upon me and flung a large cloak round my head and arms. I yelled out, as you may suppose, like a dog that is thrashed, but the cloth smothered my voice, and I was lifted into a chaise with dexterous rapidity. When my two companions released me from the cloak, I heard these dreadful words spoken by a woman, in bad French :

“ “ “ If you cry out or if you attempt to escape, if you make the very least suspicious demonstration, the gentleman opposite to you will stab you without hesitation. So you had better keep quiet. Now, I will tell you why you have been carried off. If you will take the trouble to put your hand out in this direction, you will find your case of instruments lying between us ; we sent a messenger for them to your rooms, in your name. You will need them. We are taking you to a house that you may save the honor of a lady who is about to give birth to a child that she wishes to place in this gentleman’s keeping without her husband’s knowledge. Though monsieur rarely leaves his wife, with whom he is still passionately in love, watching over her with all the vigilance of Spanish jealousy, she has succeeded in concealing her condition ; he believes her to be ill. You must bring the child into the world. The dangers of this enterprise do not concern us : only, you must obey us, otherwise the lover, who is sitting opposite to you in this carriage, and who does not understand a word of French, will kill you on the least rash movement.”

“ “ “ And who are you ? ” I asked, feeling for the speaker’s hand, for her arm was inside the sleeve of a soldier’s uniform.

“ “ “ I am my lady’s waiting-woman,” said she, “ and ready to reward you with my own person if you show yourself gallant and helpful in our necessities.”

“ “ “ Gladly,” said I, seeing that I was inevitably started on a perilous adventure.

“ “ “ Under favor of the darkness, I felt whether the person

and figure of the girl were in keeping with the idea I had formed of her from her tone of voice. The good soul had, no doubt, made up her mind from the first to accept all the chances of this strange act of kidnapping, for she kept silence very obligingly, and the coach had not been more than ten minutes on the way when she accepted and returned a very satisfactory kiss. The lover, who sat opposite to me, took no offense at an occasional quite involuntary kick ; as he did not understand French, I conclude he paid no heed to them.

“ “ “ I can be your mistress on one condition only,” said the woman, in reply to the nonsense I poured into her ear, carried away by the fervor of an improvised passion, to which everything was unpropitious.

“ “ “ And what is it ? ”

“ “ “ That you will never attempt to find out whose servant I am. If I am to go to you, it must be at night, and you must receive me in the dark.”

“ “ “ Very good,” said I.

“ “ “ We had got as far as this, when the carriage drew up under a garden wall.

“ “ “ You must allow me to bandage your eyes,” said the coquettish maid. “ You can lean on my arm, and I will lead you.”

“ “ “ She tied a handkerchief over my eyes, fastening it in a tight knot at the back of my head. I heard the sound of a key being cautiously fitted to the lock of a little side-door by the speechless lover who had sat opposite to me. In a moment the waiting-woman, whose shape was slender, and who walked with an elegant jauntiness’—*meneho*, as they call it,” Monsieur Gravier explained in a superior tone, “ a word which describes the swing which women contrive to give a certain part of their dress that shall be nameless. ‘The waiting-woman’—it is the surgeon-major who is speaking,” the narrator went on—“ “ led me along the gravel-walks of a large garden, till at a certain spot she stopped. From the louder

sound of our footsteps, I concluded that we were close to the house. "Now silence!" said she in a whisper, "and mind what you are about. Do not overlook one of my signals; I cannot speak without terrible danger for both of us, and at this moment your life is of the first importance." Then she added: "My mistress is in a room on the first floor. To get into it we must pass through her husband's room and close to his bed. Do not cough, walk softly, and follow me closely, so as not to knock against the furniture or tread anywhere but on the carpets I laid down."

"Here the lover gave an impatient growl, as a man annoyed by so much delay.

"The woman said no more, I heard a door open, I felt the warm air of the house, and we stole in like thieves. Presently the girl's light hand removed the bandage. I found myself in a lofty and spacious room, badly lighted by a smoky lamp. The window was open, but the jealous husband had fitted it with iron bars. I was in the bottom of a sack, as it were.

"On the ground a woman was lying on a mat; her head was covered with a muslin veil, but I could see her eyes through it full of tears and flashing with the brightness of stars; she held a handkerchief in her mouth, biting it so hard that her teeth were set in it: I never saw finer limbs, but her body was writhing with pain like a harp-string thrown on the fire. The poor creature had made a sort of struts of her legs by setting her feet against a chest of drawers, and with both hands she held on to the bar of a chair, her arms outstretched, with every vein painfully swelled. She might have been a criminal undergoing torture. But she did not utter a cry; there was not a sound but the dull cracking of her joints. There we stood, all three speechless and motionless. The husband snored with reassuring regularity. I wanted to study the waiting-woman's face, but she had put on a mask, which she had removed, no doubt, during our drive, and I could see

nothing but a pair of black eyes and a pleasingly rounded figure.

“ ‘The lover threw some towels over his mistress’ legs and folded the muslin veil double over her face. As soon as I had examined the lady with care, I perceived from certain symptoms which I had noted once before on a very sad occasion in my life, that the infant was dead. I turned to the maid in order to tell her this. Instantly the suspicious stranger drew his dagger; but I had time to explain the matter to the woman, who explained in a word or two to him in a low voice. On hearing my opinion, a quick, slight shudder ran through him from head to foot like a lightning flash; I fancied I could see him turn pale under his black velvet mask.

“ ‘The waiting-woman took advantage of a moment when he was bending in despair over the dying woman, who had turned blue, to point to some glasses of lemonade standing on a table, at the same time shaking her head negatively. I understood that I was not to drink anything in spite of the dreadful thirst that parched my throat. The lover was thirsty too; he took an empty glass, poured out some fresh lemonade and drank it off.

“ ‘At this moment the lady had a violent attack of pain, which showed me that now was the time to operate. I summoned all my courage, and in about an hour had succeeded in delivering her of the child, cutting it up to extract it. The Spaniard no longer thought of poisoning me, understanding that I had saved the mother’s life. Large tears fell on his cloak. The woman uttered no sound, but she trembled like a hunted animal, and was bathed in sweat.

“ ‘At one horribly critical moment she pointed in the direction of her husband’s room; he had turned in his sleep, and she alone had heard the rustle of the sheets, the creaking of the bed or of the curtain. We all paused, and the lover and the waiting-woman, through the eyeholes of their masks, gave each other a look that said, “If he wakes, shall we kill him?”’

“ ‘At that instant I put out my hand to take the glass of lemonade the Spaniard had drunk part of. He, thinking that I was about to take one of the full glasses, sprang forward like a cat, and laid his long dagger over the two poisoned goblets, leaving me his own, and signing to me to drink what was left. So much was conveyed by this quick action, and it was so full of good feeling, that I forgave him his atrocious schemes for killing me, and thus burying every trace of this event.

“ ‘After two hours of care and alarms, the maid and I put her mistress to bed. The lover, forced into so perilous an adventure, had, to provide means in case of having to fly, a packet of diamonds stuck to paper; these he put into my pocket without my knowing it; and I may add, parenthetically, that as I was ignorant of the Spaniard’s magnificent gift, my servant stole the jewels the day after, and went off with a perfect fortune.

“ ‘I whispered my instructions to the waiting-woman as to the further care of her patient, and wanted to be gone. The maid remained with her mistress, which was not very reassuring, but I was on my guard. The lover made a bundle of the dead infant and the blood-stained cloths, tying it up tightly, and hiding it under his cloak; he passed his hand over my eyes as if to bid me to see nothing, and signed to me to take hold of the skirt of his coat. He went first out of the room, and I followed, not without a parting glance at my lady of an hour. She, seeing the Spaniard had gone out, snatched off her mask and showed me an exquisite face.

“ ‘When I found myself in the garden, in the open air, I confess that I breathed as if a heavy load had been lifted from my breast. I followed my guide at a respectful distance, watching his least movement with keen attention. Having reached the little door, he took my hand and pressed a seal to my lips, set in a ring which I had seen him wearing on a finger of his left hand, and I gave him to understand that this sig-

nificant sign would be obeyed. In the street two horses were waiting ; we each mounted one. My Spaniard took my bridle, held his own between his teeth, for his right hand held the blood-stained bundle, and we went off at lightning speed.

“ ‘I could not see the smallest object by which to retrace the road we came. At dawn I found myself close by my own door, and the Spaniard fled toward the Atocha gate.’ ”

“ ‘And you saw nothing which could lead you to suspect who the woman was whom you had attended?’ the colonel asked of the surgeon.

“ ‘One thing only,’ he replied. ‘When I turned the unknown lady over, I happened to remark a mole on her arm, about half-way down, as big as a lentil, and surrounded with brown hairs.’ At this instant the rash speaker turned pale. All our eyes, that had been fixed on his, followed his glance, and we saw a Spaniard, whose glittering eyes shone through a clump of orange-trees. On finding himself the object of our attention, the man vanished with the swiftness of a sylph. A young captain rushed in pursuit.

“ ‘By heaven!’ cried the surgeon, ‘that basilisk stare has chilled me through, my friends. I can hear bells ringing in my ears! I may take leave of you; you will bury me here!’ ”

“ ‘What a fool you are!’ exclaimed Colonel Hulot. ‘Falcon is on the track of the Spaniard who was listening, and he will call him to account.’ ”

“ ‘Well,’ cried one and another, seeing the captain return quite out of breath.

“ ‘The devil’s in it,’ said Falcon; ‘the man went through a wall, I believe! As I do not suppose that he is a wizard, I fancy he must belong to the house! He knows every corner and turning, and easily escaped.’ ”

“ ‘I am done for,’ said the surgeon, in a gloomy voice.

“ ‘Come, come, keep calm, Béga,’ said I (his name was Béga), ‘we will sit on watch with you till you leave. We will not leave you this evening.’ ”

“In point of fact, three young officers who had been losing at play went home with the surgeon to his lodgings, and one of us offered to stay with him.

“Within two days Béga had obtained his recall to France ; he made arrangements to travel with a lady to whom Murat had given a strong escort, and had just finished dinner with a party of friends, when his servant came to say that a young lady wished to speak to him. The surgeon and the three officers went down suspecting mischief. The stranger could only say: ‘Be on your guard——’ when she dropped down dead. It was the waiting-woman, who, finding she had been poisoned, had hoped to arrive in time to warn her lover.

“‘Devil take it!’ cried Captain Falcon, ‘that is what I call love! No woman on earth but a Spaniard can run about with a dose of poison in her inside!’

“Béga remained strangely pensive. To drown the dark presentiments that haunted him, he sat down to table again, and with his companions drank immoderately. The whole party went early to bed, half-drunk.

“In the middle of the night the hapless Béga was aroused by the sharp rattle of the curtain rings pulled violently along the rods. He sat up in bed, in the mechanical trepidation which we all feel on waking with such a start. He saw standing before him a Spaniard wrapped in a cloak, who fixed on him the same burning gaze that he had seen through the bushes.

“Béga shouted out: ‘Help, help, come at once, friends!’ But the Spaniard answered his cry of distress with a bitter laugh. ‘Opium grows for all?’ said he.

“Having thus pronounced sentence as it were, the stranger pointed to the three other men sleeping soundly, took from under his cloak the arm of a woman, freshly amputated, and held it out to Béga, pointing to a mole like that he had so rashly described. ‘Is it the same?’ he asked. By the light of the lantern the man had set on the bed, Béga recognized the arm, and his speechless amazement was answer enough.

"Without waiting for further information, the lady's husband stabbed him to the heart."

"You must tell that to the marines!" said Lousteau. "It needs their robust faith to swallow it! Can you tell me which told the tale, the dead man or the Spaniard?"

"Monsieur," replied the receiver-general, "I nursed poor Béga, who died five days after in dreadful suffering. That is not the end.

"At the time of the expedition sent out to restore Ferdinand VII. I was appointed to a place in Spain; but happily for me, I had got no farther than Tours when I was promised the post of receiver here at Sancerre. On the eve of setting out I was at a ball at Madame de Listomère's, where we were to meet several Spaniards of high rank. On rising from the card-table, I saw a Spanish grandee, an *afrancesado* in exile, who had been about a fortnight in Touraine. He had arrived very late at this ball—his first appearance in society—accompanied by his wife, whose right arm was perfectly motionless. Everybody made way in silence for this couple, whom we all watched with some excitement. Imagine a picture by Murillo come to life. Under black and hollow brows the man's eyes were like a fixed blaze; his face looked dried up, his bald skull was red, and his frame was a terror to behold, he was so emaciated. His wife—no, you cannot imagine her. Her figure had the supple swing for which the Spaniards created the word *mencho*; though pale, she was still beautiful; her complexion was dazzlingly fair—a rare thing in a Spaniard; and her gaze, full of the Spanish sun, fell on you like a stream of molten lead.

"'Madame,' said I to her, toward the end of the evening, 'what occurrence led to the loss of your arm?'"

"'I lost it in the war of independence,' said she."

"Spain is a strange country," said Madame de la Baudraye.

"It still shows traces of Arab manners."

"Oh!" said the journalist, laughing. "the mania for

cutting off arms is an old one there. It turns up again every now then like some of our newspaper hoaxes, for the subject has given plots for plays on the Spanish stage so early as the year 1570——”

“Then do you think me capable of inventing such a story?” said Monsieur Gravier, nettled by Lousteau’s impertinent tone.

“Quite incapable of such a thing,” said the journalist with grave irony.

“Pooh!” said Bianchon, “the inventions of romances and play-writers are quite as often transferred from their books and pieces into real life, as the events of real life are made use of on the stage or adapted to a tale. I have seen the comedy of ‘Tartuffe’ played out—with the exception of the close; Orgon’s eyes could not be opened to the truth.”

“And the tragi-comedy of ‘Adolphe’ by Benjamin Constant is constantly enacted,” cried Lousteau.

“And do you suppose,” asked Madame de La Baudraye, “that such adventures as Monsieur Gravier has related could ever occur now, and in France?”

“Dear me!” cried Clagny, “of the ten or twelve startling crimes that are annually committed in France, quite half are mixed up with circumstances at least as extraordinary as these, and often outdoing them in romantic details. Indeed, is not this proved by the reports in the ‘Gazette des Tribunaux’—the Police News—in my opinion, one of the worst abuses of the press? This newspaper, which was started only in 1826 or 1827, was not in existence when I began my professional career, and the facts of the crime I am about to speak of were not known beyond the limits of the department where it was committed.

“In the quarter of Saint-Pierre-des-Corps at Tours, a woman whose husband had disappeared at the time when the army of the Loire was disbanded, and who had mourned him deeply, was conspicuous for her excess of devotion. When the mission priests went through all the provinces to restore the crosses

that had been destroyed and to efface the traces of revolutionary impiety, this widow was one of their most zealous proselytes, she carried a cross and nailed to it a silver heart pierced by an arrow; and, for a long time after, she went every evening to pray at the foot of the cross which was erected behind the cathedral apse.

“At last, overwhelmed by remorse, she confessed to a horrible crime. She had killed her husband, as Fualdès was murdered, by bleeding him; she had salted the body and packed it in pieces into old casks, exactly as if it had been pork; and for a long time she had taken a piece every morning and thrown it into the Loire. Her confessor consulted his superiors, and told her that it would be his duty to inform the public prosecutor. The woman awaited the action of the law. The public prosecutor and the examining judge, on examining the cellar, found the husband’s head still in pickle in one of the casks. ‘Wretched woman,’ said the judge to the accused, ‘since you were so barbarous as to throw your husband’s body piecemeal into the river, why did you not get rid of the head? Then there would have been no proof.’

“‘I often tried, monsieur,’ said she, ‘but it was too heavy.’”

“Well, and what became of the woman?” asked the two Parisians.

“She was sentenced and executed at Tours,” replied the lawyer; “but her repentance and piety had attracted interest in spite of her monstrous crime.”

“And do you suppose,” said Bianchon, “that we know all the tragedies that are played out behind the curtain of private life that the public never lifts? It seems to me that human justice is ill adapted to judge of crimes as between husband and wife. It has every right to intervene as the police; but in equity it knows nothing of the heart of the matter.”

“The victim has in many cases been for so long the tormentor,” said Madame de La Baudraye guilelessly, “that the

crime would sometimes seem almost excusable if the accused could tell all."

This reply, led up to by Bianchon and by the story which Clagny had told, left the two Parisians excessively puzzled as to Dinah's position.

At bedtime council was held, one of those discussions which take place in the passages of old country-houses where the bachelors linger, candle in hand, for mysterious conversations.

Monsieur Gravier was now informed of the object in view during this entertaining evening which had brought Madame de La Baudraye's innocence to light.

"But, after all," said Lousteau, "our hostess' serenity may indicate deep depravity instead of the most childlike innocence. The public prosecutor looks to me quite capable of suggesting that little La Baudraye should be put in pickle and——"

"He is not to return till to-morrow; who knows what may happen in the course of the night?" said Gatien.

"We will know!" cried Monsieur Gravier.

In the life of a country house a number of practical jokes are considered admissible, some of them odiously treacherous. Monsieur Gravier, who had seen so much of the world, proposed setting seals on the doors of Madame de La Baudraye and of the public prosecutor. The ducks that denounced the poet Ibycus are as nothing in comparison with the single hair that these country spies fasten across the opening of a door by means of two little flattened pills of wax, fixed so high up, or so low down, that the trick is never suspected. If the gallant comes out of his own door and opens the other, the broken hair tells the tale.

When everybody was supposed to be asleep, the doctor, the journalist, the receiver of taxes, and Gatien came barefoot, like robbers, and silently fastened up the two doors, agreeing to come again at five in the morning to examine the state of

the fastenings. Imagine their astonishment and Gatien's delight when all four, candle in hand, and with hardly any clothes on, came to look at the hairs, and found them in perfect preservation on both doors.

"Is it the same wax?" asked Monsieur Gravier.

"Are they the same hairs?" asked Lousteau.

"Yes," replied Gatien.

"This quite alters the matter!" cried Lousteau. "You have been beating the bush for a will-o'-the-wisp."

Monsieur Gravier and Gatien exchanged questioning glances which were meant to convey: "Is there not something offensive to us in that speech? Ought we to laugh or to be angry?"

"If Dinah is virtuous," said the journalist in a whisper to Bianchon, "she is worth an effort on my part to pluck the fruit of her first love."

The idea of carrying by storm a fortress that had for nine years stood out against the besiegers of Sancerre smiled on Lousteau.

With this notion in his head, he was the first to go down and into the garden, hoping to meet his hostess. And this chance fell out all the more easily because Madame de La Baudraye on her part wished to converse with her critic. Half such chances are planned.

"You were out shooting yesterday, monsieur," said Madame de La Baudraye. "This morning I am rather puzzled as to how to find you any new amusement; unless you would like to come to La Baudraye, where you may study more of our provincial life than you can see here, for you have made but one mouthful of my absurdities. However, the saying about the handsomest girl in the world is not less true of the poor provincial woman!"

"That little simpleton Gatien has, I suppose, repeated to you a speech I made simply to make him confess that he adored you," said Étienne. "Your silence, during dinner

the day before yesterday and throughout the evening, was enough to betray one of those indiscretions which we never commit in Paris. What can I say? I do not flatter myself that you will understand me. In fact, I laid a plot for the telling of all those stories yesterday solely to see whether I could rouse you and Monsieur de Clagny to a pang of remorse. Oh! be quite easy; your innocence is fully proved.

"If you had the slightest fancy for that estimable magistrate, you would have lost all your value in my eyes. I love perfection.

"You do not, you cannot love that cold, dried-up, taciturn little usurer on wine-casks and land, who would leave any man in the lurch for twenty-five centimes on a renewal. Oh, I have fully recognized Monsieur de La Baudraye's similarity to a Parisian bill-discounter; their nature is identical. At eight-and-twenty, handsome, well conducted, and childless—I assure you, madame, I never saw the problem of virtue more admirably expressed. The author of '*Paquita la Sevillane*' must have dreamed many dreams!

"I can speak of such things without the hypocritical gloss lent them by young men, for I am old before my time. I have no illusions left. Can a man have any illusions in the trade I follow?"

By opening the game in this tone, Lousteau cut out all excursions in the *Pays de Tendre* (country of sentiment), where genuine passion beats the bush so long; he went straight to the point and placed himself in a position to force the offer of what women often make a man pray for, for years; witness the hapless public prosecutor, to whom the greatest favor had consisted in clasping Dinah's hand to his heart more tenderly than usual as they walked, happy man!

And Madame de La Baudraye, to be true to her reputation as a Superior Woman, tried to console the Manfred of the press by prophesying such a future of love as he had not had in his mind.

"You have sought pleasure," said she "but you have never loved. Believe me, true love often comes late in life. Remember Monsieur de Gentz, who fell in love in his old age with Fanny Ellsler, and left the Revolution of July to take its course while he made a practice of attending the dancer's rehearsals."

"It seems to me unlikely," replied Lousteau. "I can still believe in love, but I have ceased to believe in woman. There are in me, I suppose, certain defects which hinder me from being loved, for I have often been thrown over. Perhaps I have too strong a feeling for the ideal—like all men who have looked too closely into reality——"

Madame de La Baudraye at last heard the mind of a man who, flung into the wittiest Parisian circles, represented to her its most daring axioms, its almost artless depravity, its advanced convictions; who, if he were not really superior, acted superiority extremely well. Étienne, performing before Dinah, had all the success of a first night. Paquita of Sancerre scented the storms, the atmosphere of Paris. She spent one of the most delightful days of her life with Lousteau and Bianchon, who told her strange tales about the great men of the day, the anecdotes which will some day form the ana of our century; sayings and doings that were the common talk of Paris, but quite new to her.

Of course, Lousteau spoke very ill of the great female celebrity of Le Berry, with the obvious intention of flattering Madame de La Baudraye and leading her into literary confidences, by suggesting that she could rival so great a writer. This praise intoxicated Madame de La Baudraye; and Monsieur de Clagny, Monsieur Gravier, and Gatien, all thought her warmer in her manner to Étienne than she had been on the previous day. Dinah's three *attachés* greatly regretted having all gone to Sancerre to blow the trumpet in honor of the evening at Anzy; nothing, to hear them, had ever been so brilliant. The hours had fled on feet so light that none

had marked their pace. The two Parisians they spoke of as perfect prodigies.

These exaggerated reports loudly proclaimed on the mall brought sixteen persons to Anzy that evening, some in family coaches, some in waggonettes, and a few bachelors on hired saddle horses. By about seven o'clock this provincial company had made a more or less graceful entry into the huge Anzy drawing-room, which Dinah, warned of the invasion, had lighted up, giving it all the lustre it was capable of by taking the holland covers off the handsome furniture, for she regarded this assembly as one of her great triumphs. Lousteau, Bianchon, and Dinah exchanged meaning looks as they studied the attitudes and listened to the speeches of these visitors, attracted by curiosity.

What invalidated ribbons, what ancestral laces, what ancient flowers, more imaginative than imitative, were boldly displayed on some perennial caps! The Presidente Boirouge, Bianchon's cousin, exchanged a few words with the doctor, from whom she extracted some "advice gratis" by expatiating on certain pains in the chest, which she declared were nervous, but which he ascribed to chronic indigestion.

"Simply drink a cup of tea every day an hour after dinner, as the English do, and you will get over it, for what you suffer from is an English malady," Bianchon replied very gravely.

"He is certainly a great physician," said the presidente, coming back to Mesdames de Clagny, Popinot-Chandier, and Gorju, the mayor's wife.

"They say," replied Madame de Clagny behind her fan, "that Dinah sent for him, not so much with a view to the elections as to ascertain why she has no children."

In the first excitement of this success, Lousteau introduced the great doctor as the only possible candidate at the ensuing elections. But Bianchon, to the great satisfaction of the new sub-prefect, remarked that it seemed to him almost impossible to give up science in favor of politics.

"Only a physician without a practice," said he, "could care to be returned as a deputy. Nominate statesmen, thinkers, men whose knowledge is universal, and who are capable of placing themselves on the high level which a legislator should occupy. That is what is lacking in our Chambers, and what our country needs."

Two or three young ladies, some of the younger men, and the elder women stared at Lousteau as if he were a mountebank.

"Monsieur Gatien Boirouge declares that Monsieur Lousteau makes twenty thousand francs a year by his writings," observed the mayor's wife to Madame de Clagny. "Can you believe it?"

"Is it possible? Why, a public prosecutor gets but a thousand crowns!"

"Monsieur Gatien," said Madame Chandier, "get Monsieur Lousteau to talk a little louder. I have not heard him yet."

"What pretty shoes he wears," said Mademoiselle Chandier to her brother, "and how they shine!"

"Yes—patent leather."

"Why haven't you the same?"

Lousteau began to feel that he was too much on show, and saw in the manners of the good townsfolk indications of the desires that had brought them there.

"What trick can I play them?" thought he.

At this moment the footman, so-called—a farm-servant put into livery—brought in the letters and papers, and among them a packet of proof, which the journalist left for Bianchon; for Madame de La Baudraye, on seeing the parcel, of which the form and string were obviously from the printers, exclaimed—

"What, does literature pursue you even here?"

"Not literature," replied he, "but a review in which I am now finishing a story to come out ten days hence. I have

reached the stage of '*To be concluded in our next,*' so I was obliged to give my address to the printer. Oh, we eat very hard-earned bread at the hands of these speculators in black and white! I will give you a description of these editors of magazines."

"When will the conversation begin?" Madame de Clagny asked of Dinah, as one might ask: "When do the fireworks go off."

"I fancied we should hear some amusing stories," said Madame Popinot to her cousin, the Presidente Boirouge.

At this moment, when the good folk of Sancerre were beginning to murmur like an impatient parquet, Lousteau observed that Bianchon was lost in a meditation inspired by the wrapper round the proofs.

"What is it?" asked Étienne.

"Why, here is the most fascinating romance possible on some spoilt proof used to wrap yours in. Here, read it, '*Olympia or Roman Revenge.*'"

"Let us see," said Lousteau, taking the sheet the doctor held out to him, and he read aloud as follows:

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cavern. Rinaldo, indignant at his companions' cowardice, for they had no courage but in the open field, and dared not venture into Rome, looked at them with scorn.

"Then I go alone?" said he. He seemed to reflect, and then he went on: "You are poor wretches. I shall proceed alone, and have the rich booty to myself. You hear me! Farewell."

"My captain," said Lamberti, "if you should be captured without having succeeded?"

"God protects me!" said Rinaldo,
pointing to the sky.

With these words he went out, and on
his way he met the steward Bracciano

"That is the end of the page," said Lousteau, to whom every one had listened devoutly.

"He is reading his work to us," said Gatien to Madame Popinot-Chandier's son.

"From the first word, ladies," said the journalist, jumping at an opportunity of mystifying the natives, "it is evident that the brigands are in a cave. But how careless romancers of that date were as to details which are nowadays so closely, so elaborately studied under the name of 'local color.' If the robbers were in a cavern, instead of pointing to the sky he ought to have pointed to the vault above him. In spite of this inaccuracy, Rinaldo strikes me as a man of spirit, and his appeal to God is quite Italian. There must have been a touch of local color in this romance. Why, what with brigands, and a cavern, and one Lamberti who could foresee future possibilities—there is a whole melodrama in that page. Add to these elements a little intrigue, a peasant maiden with her hair dressed high, short skirts, and a hundred or so of bad couplets. Oh! the public would crowd to see it! And then Rinaldo—how well the name suits Lafont! By giving him black whiskers, tightly-fitting trousers, a cloak, a mustache, a pistol, and a peaked hat—if the manager of the Vaudeville Theatre were but bold enough to pay for a few newspaper articles, that would secure fifty performances, and six thousand francs for the author's rights, if only I were to cry it up in my columns.

"To proceed :

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The Duchess of Bracciano found
her glove. Adolphe, who had brought
her back to the orange grove, might

L

certainly have supposed that there was some purpose in her forgetfulness, for at this moment the arbor was deserted. The sound of the festivities was audible in the distance. The puppet-show that had been promised had attracted all the guests to the ballroom. Never had Olympia looked more beautiful. Her lover's eyes met hers with an answering glow, and they understood each other. There was a moment of silence, delicious to their souls, and impossible to describe. They sat down on the same bench where they had sat in the presence of the Cavaliere Paluzzi and the laughing

“Devil take it! Our Rinaldo has vanished!” cried Lousteau. “But a literary man once started by this page would make rapid progress in the comprehension of the plot. The Duchess Olympia is a lady who could intentionally forget her gloves in a deserted arbor.”

“Unless she may be classed between the oyster and head-clerk of an office, the two creatures nearest to marble in the zoological kingdom, it is impossible not to discern in Olympia——” Bianchon began.

“A woman of thirty,” Madame de La Baudraye hastily imposed, fearing some all too medical term.

“Then Adolphe must be two-and-twenty,” the doctor went on, “for an Italian woman at thirty is equivalent to a Parisian of forty.”

“From these two facts, the romance may easily be reconstructed,” said Lousteau. “And this Cavaliere Paluzzi—what a man! The style is weak in these two passages; the author was perhaps a clerk in the excise office, and wrote the novel to pay his tailor.”

“In his time,” said Bianchon, “the censor flourished; you

must show as much indulgence to a man who underwent the ordeal by scissors in 1805 as to those who went to the scaffold in 1793."

"Do you understand in the least?" asked Madame Gorju timidly of Madame de Clagny.

The public prosecutor's wife, who, to use a phrase of Monsieur Gravier's, might have put a Cossack to flight in 1814, straightened herself in her chair like a horseman in his stirrups, and made a face at her neighbor, conveying: "They are looking at us; we must smile as if we understood."

"Charming!" said the mayoress to Gatien. "Pray go on, Monsieur Lousteau."

Lousteau looked at the two women, two Indian idols, and contrived to keep his countenance. He thought it desirable to say "Attention!" before going on as follows:

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dress rustled in the silence. Suddenly Cardinal Borborigano stood before the duchess.

His face was gloomy, his brow was dark with clouds, and a bitter smile lurked in his wrinkles.

"Madame," said he, "you are under suspicion. If you are guilty, fly. If you are not, still fly; because, whether criminal or innocent, you will find it easier to defend yourself from a distance."

"I thank your eminence for your solicitude," said she. "The Duke of Bracciano will reappear when I find it needful to prove that he is alive."

"Cardinal Borborigano!" exclaimed Bianchon. "By the pope's keys! If you do not agree with me that there is a magnificent creation in the very name, if at those words 'dress

rustled in the silence' you do not feel all the poetry thrown into the part of Schedoni by Mrs. Radcliffe in 'The Black Penitent,' you do not deserve to read a romance."

"For my part," said Dinah, who had some pity on the eighteen faces gazing up at Lousteau, "I see how the story is progressing. I know it all. I am in Rome; I can see the body of a murdered husband whose wife, as bold as she is wicked, has made her bed on the crater of a volcano. Every night, at every kiss, she says to herself: 'All will be discovered!'"

"Can you see her," said Lousteau, "clasping Monsieur Adolphe in her arms, to her heart, throwing her whole life into a kiss? Adolphe I see as a well-made young man, but not clever—the sort of man an Italian woman likes. Rinaldo hovers behind the scenes of a plot we do not know, but which must be as full of incident as a melodrama by Pixérécourt. Or we can imagine Rinaldo crossing the stage in the background like a figure in one of Victor Hugo's plays."

"He, perhaps, is the husband," exclaimed Madame de La Baudraye.

"Do you understand anything of it all?" Madame Piédefer asked of the presidente.

"Why, it is charming," said Dinah to her mother.

All the good folk of Sancerre sat with eyes as large as five-franc pieces.

"Go on, I beg," said the hostess.

Lousteau went on:

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"Your key——"

"Have you lost it?"

"It is in the arbor."

"Let us hasten."

"Can the cardinal have taken it?"

"No, here it is."

"What danger we have escaped!"

Olympia looked at the key, and

fancied she recognized it as her own. But Rinaldo had changed it; his cunning had triumphed; he had the right key. Like a modern Cartouche, he was no less skillful than bold, and suspecting that nothing but a vast treasure could require a duchess to carry it constantly at her belt.

“Guess!” cried Lousteau. “The corresponding page is not here. We must look to page 212 to relieve our anxiety.”

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“If the key had been lost?”

“He would now be a dead man.”

“Dead? But ought you not to grant the last request he made, and to give him his liberty on the conditions——”

“You do not know him.”

“But——”

“Silence! I took you for my lover, not for my confessor.”

Adolphe was silent.

“And then comes an exquisite galloping goat, a tail-piece drawn by Normand, and cut by Duplat. The names are signed,” said Lousteau.

“Well, and then?” said such of the audience as understood.

“That is the end of the chapter,” said Lousteau. “The fact of this tail-piece changes my views as to the authorship. To have his book gotten up, under the Empire, with vignettes engraved on wood, the writer must have been a councilor of State, or Madame Barthélemy-Hadot, or the late lamented Desforges, or Sewrin.”

“‘Adolphe was silent.’ Ah!” cried Bianchon, “the duchess must have been under thirty.”

"If there is no more, invent a conclusion," said Madame de La Baudraye.

"You see," said Lousteau, "the waste-sheet has been printed fair on one side only. In printer's lingo, it is a back sheet, or, to make it clearer, the other side which would have to be printed is covered all over with pages printed one above another, all experiments in making up. It would take too long to explain to you all the complications of a making-up sheet; but you may understand that it will show no more trace of the first twelve pages that were printed on it than you would in the least remember the first stroke of the bastinado if a pasha had condemned you to have fifty on the soles of your feet."

"I am quite bewildered," said Madame Popinot-Chandier to Monsieur Gravier. "I am vainly trying to connect the councilor of state, the cardinal, the key, and the making-up——"

"You have not the key to the jest," said Monsieur Gravier. "Well! no more have I, fair lady, if that can comfort you."

"But here is another sheet," said Bianchon, hunting on the table where the proofs had been laid.

"Capital!" said Lousteau, "and it is complete and uninjured! It is signed 'IV; J, Second Edition.' Ladies, the figure IV means that this is part of the fourth volume. The letter J, the tenth letter of the alphabet, shows that this is the tenth sheet. And it is perfectly clear to me that, in spite of any publisher's tricks, this romance, in four duodecimo volumes, had a great success, since it came to a second edition. We will read on and find a clue to the mystery."

"Oh, get along!"

"But," said Madame de La Baudraye, "some important events have taken place between your waste sheet and this page."

"This complete sheet, madame, this precious make-up sheet. But does the waste sheet in which the duchess forgets her gloves in the arbor belong to the fourth volume? Well, deuce take it—to proceed:

Rinaldo saw no safer refuge than to make forthwith for the cellar where the treasures of the Bracciano family no doubt lay hid. As light of foot as Camilla sung by the Latin poet, he flew to the entrance to the Baths of Vespasian. The torchlight already flickered on the walls when Rinaldo, with the readiness bestowed on him by nature, discovered the door concealed in the stone work, and suddenly vanished. A hideous thought then flashed on Rinaldo's brain, like lightning rending a cloud: He was imprisoned! He felt the

"Yes, this make-up sheet follows the waste sheet. The last page of the damaged sheet was 212, and this is 217. In fact, since Rinaldo, who in the earlier fragment stole the key of the duchess' treasure by exchanging it for another very much like it, is now—on the make-up sheet—in the palace of the Dukes of Bracciano, the story seems to me to be advancing to a conclusion of some kind. I hope it is as clear to you as it becomes to me. I understand that the festivities are over, the lovers have returned to the Bracciano Palace; it is night—one o'clock in the morning. Rinaldo will have a good time."

"And Adolphe, too!" said President Boirouge, who was considered rather free in his speech.

"And the style!" said Bianchon. "Rinaldo, who saw no better refuge than to make for the cellar."

"It is quite clear that neither Maradan, nor Treuttel and Wurtz, nor Doguereau were the printers," said Lousteau, "for they employed proof-readers, a luxury in which our publishers might very well indulge, and the writers of the present day would benefit greatly. Some scrubby pamphlet-printer on the quay——"

"What quay?" a lady asked of her neighbor. "They spoke of baths——"

"Pray go on," said Madame de La Baudraye.

"At any rate, it is not by a councilor," said Bianchon.

"It may be by Madame Hadot," replied Lousteau.

"What has Madame Hadot of La Charité to do with it?" Mme. the Presidente asked of her son.

"This Madame Hadot, my dear friend," the hostess answered, "was an authoress, who lived at the time of the Consulate."

"What, did women write in the Emperor's time?" asked Madame Popinot-Chandier.

"What of Madame de Genlis and Madame de Staël?" cried the public prosecutor, piqued on Dinah's account by this remark.

"To be sure!"

"I beg you to go on," said Madame de La Baudraye to Lousteau.

Lousteau went on, saying: "Page 218.

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wall with uneasy haste, and gave a shriek of despair when he had vainly sought any trace of a secret spring. It was impossible to ignore the horrible truth. The door, cleverly constructed to serve the vengeful purposes of the duchess, could not be opened from

within. Rinaldo laid his cheek against the wall in various spots; nowhere could he feel the warmer air from the passage. He had hoped he might find a crack that would show him where there was an opening in the wall, but nothing, nothing! The whole seemed to be of one block of marble.

Then he gave a hollow roar like that of a hyæna——

“Well, we fancied that the cry of the hyæna was a recent invention of our own!” said Lousteau, “and it was already known to the literature of the Empire. It is even introduced with a certain skill in natural history, as we see in the word ‘hollow.’”

“Make no more comments, monsieur,” said Madame de La Baudraye.

“There, you see!” cried Bianchon. “Interest, the romantic demon, has you by the collar, as he had me a while ago.”

“Read on,” cried de Clagny, “I understand.”

“What a coxcomb!” said the presiding judge in a whisper to his neighbor, the sub-prefect.

“He wants to please Madame de La Baudraye,” replied the new sub-prefect.

“Well, then, I will read straight on,” said Lousteau solemnly.

Everybody listened in dead silence.

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A deep groan answered Rinaldo's cry, but in his alarm he took it for an echo, so weak and hollow was the sound. It could not proceed from any human breast.

"Santa Maria!" said the voice.

"If I stir from this spot I shall never find it again," thought Rinaldo, when he had recovered his usual presence of mind. "If I knock, I shall be discovered. What am I to do?"

"Who is here?" asked the voice.

"Halloo!" cried the brigand; "do the toads here talk?"

"I am the Duke of Bracciano.

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Whoever you may be, if you are not a follower of the duchess', in the name of all the saints, come toward me."

"I should have to know where to find you, Monsieur le Duc," said Rinaldo, with the insolence of a man who knows himself to be necessary.

"I can see you, my friend, for my eyes are accustomed to the darkness. Listen: walk straightforward—good; now turn to the left—come on—this way. There, we are close to each other."

Rinaldo, putting out his hands as a precaution, touched some iron bars.

"I am being deceived," cried the bandit.

"No, you are touching my cage.

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Sit down on a broken shaft of porphyry that is there."

"How can the Duke of Bracciano be in a cage?" asked the brigand.

"My friend, I have been here for thirty months, standing up, unable to

sit down—— But you, who are you?"

"I am Rinaldo, prince of the Campagna, the chief of four-and-twenty brave men whom the law describes as miscreants, whom all the ladies admire, and whom judges hang in obedience to an old habit."

"God be praised! I am saved. An honest man would have been afraid, whereas I am sure of coming

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to an understanding with you," cried the duke. "Oh, my worthy deliverer, you must be armed to the teeth."

"*E verissimo*" (most true).

"Do you happen to have——"

"Yes; files, pincers — *Corpo di Bacco!* (body of Bacchus). I came to borrow the treasures of the Bracciani on a long loan."

"You will earn a handsome share of them very legitimately, my good Rinaldo, and we may possibly go man-hunting together——"

"You surprise me, eccellenza!"

"Listen to me, Rinaldo. I will say nothing of the craving for vengeance that gnaws at my heart. I have been here for thirty months—you, too, are Italian—you will

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understand me! Alas, my friend, my fatigue and my horrible incarceration are as nothing in comparison with the rage that devours my soul. The

Duchess of Bracciano is still one of the most beautiful women in Rome. I loved her well enough to be jealous——”

“You, her husband?”

“Yes, I was wrong, no doubt.”

“It is not the correct thing, to be sure,” said Rinaldo.

“My jealousy was roused by the duchess’ conduct,” the duke went on. “The event proved me right. A young Frenchman fell in love with Olympia, and she loved him. I had proofs of their reciprocal affection

“Pray excuse me, ladies,” said Lousteau, “but I find it impossible to go on without remarking to you how direct this Empire literature is, going to the point without any details, a characteristic, as it seems to me, of a primitive time. The literature of that period holds a place between the summaries of chapters in ‘*Télémaque*’ and the categorical reports of a public office. It had ideas, but refrained from expressing them, it was so scornful! It was observant, but would not communicate its observations to any one, it was so miserly!—Nobody but Fouché ever mentioned what he had observed. ‘At that time,’ to quote the words of one of the most imbecile critics in the ‘*Revue des Deux Mondes*,’ ‘literature was content with a clear sketch and the simple outline of all antique statues. It did not dance over its periods.’ I should think not! It had no periods to dance over. It had no words to make play with. You were plainly told that Lubin loved Toinette; that Toinette did not love Lubin; that Lubin killed Toinette and the police caught Lubin, who was put in prison, tried at the assizes, and guillotined. A strong sketch, a clear outline! What a noble drama! Well, in these days the barbarians make words sparkle.”

“Like hair in a frost,” said Monsieur de Clagny.

"So those are the airs you affect ;"* retorted Lousteau.

"What can he mean ?" asked Madame de Clagny, puzzled by this vile pun.

"I seem to be walking in the dark," replied the mayoress.

"The jest would be lost in an explanation," remarked Gatién.

"Nowadays," Lousteau went on, "a novelist draws characters, and, instead of a 'simple outline,' he unveils the human heart and gives you some interest either in Lubin or in Toinette."

"For my part, I am alarmed at the progress of public knowledge in the matter of literature," said Bianchon. "Like the Russians, beaten by Charles XII., who at last learned the art of war, the reader has learned the art of writing. Formerly all that was expected of a romance was that it should be interesting. As to style, no one cared for that, not even the author; as to ideas—zero; as to local color—*non est*. By degrees the reader has demanded style, interest, pathos, and complete information; he insists on the five literary senses—Invention, Style, Thought, Learning, and Feeling. Then came criticism commenting on everything. The critic, incapable of inventing anything but calumny, pronounces every work that proceeds from a not perfect brain to be deformed. Some magicians, as Walter Scott, for instance, having appeared in the world, who combined all the five literary senses, such writers as had but one—wit or learning, style or feeling—these cripples, these acephalous, maimed, or purblind creatures—in a literary sense—have taken to shrieking

*The rendering given above is only intended to link the various speeches into coherence; it has no resemblance with the French. In the original, "*Font chatoyer les mots*."

"Et quelquefois les *morts*," dit Monsieur de Clagny.

"Ah! Lousteau! vous vous donnez de ces R-là" (*airs-là*).

Literally: "Make words brilliant." "And sometimes the dead." "Ah, are those the airs you assume?"—the play on the insertion of the letter R (*mots, morts*) has no meaning in English.

that all is lost, and have preached a crusade against men who were spoiling the business, or have denounced their works."

"The history of your last literary quarrel!" Dinah observed.

"For pity's sake, come back to the Duke of Bracciano," cried Monsieur de Clagny.

To the despair of all the company, Lousteau went on with the make-up sheet.

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I then wished to make sure of my misfortune that I might be avenged under the protection of Providence and the Law. The duchess guessed my intentions. We were at war in our purposes before we fought with poison in our hands. We tried to tempt each other to such confidence as we could not feel, I to induce her to drink a potion, she to get possession of me. She was a woman, and she won the day; for women have a snare more than we men. I fell into it—I was happy; but I awoke next day in this iron cage. All through the day I bellowed with rage in the dark-

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ness of this cellar, over which is the duchess' bedroom. At night an ingenious counterpoise acting as a lift raised me through the floor, and I saw the duchess in her lover's arms. She threw me a piece of bread, my daily pittance.

"Thus have I lived for thirty months! From this marble prison my cries can reach no ear. There is

no chance for me. I will hope no more. Indeed, the duchess' room is at the farthest end of the palace, and when I am carried up there none can hear my voice. Each time I see my wife she shows me the poison I had

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OLYMPIA

prepared for her and her lover. I crave it for myself, but she will not let me die; she gives me bread, and I eat it.

"I have done well to eat and live; I had not reckoned on robbers!"

"Yes, *eccellenza*, when those fools the honest men are asleep, we are wide awake."

"Oh, Rinaldo, all I possess shall be yours; we will share my treasure like brothers; I would give you everything—even to my duchy——"

"*Eccellenza*, procure from the pope an absolution *in articulo mortis* (at the point of death). It would be of more use to me in my walk of life."

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"What you will. Only file through the bars of my cage, and lend me your dagger. We have but little time—quick, quick! Oh, if my teeth were but files! I have tried to eat through this iron."

"*Eccellenza*," said Rinaldo, "I have already filed through one bar."

"You are a god!"

"Your wife was at the fête given by the Princess Villaviciosa. She brought home her little Frenchman;

she is drunk with love. You have plenty of time."

"Have you done?"

"Yes."

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"Your dagger?" said the duke eagerly to the brigand."

"Here it is."

"Good. I hear the clatter of the spring."

"Do not forget me!" cried the robber, who knew what gratitude was.

"No more than my father," cried the duke.

"Farewell," said Rinaldo. "Lord! How he flies up!" he added to himself as the duke disappeared. "No more than his father! If that is all he means to do for me. And I had sworn a vow never to injure a woman!"

But let us leave the robber for a

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moment to his meditations and go up, like the duke, to the rooms in the palace.

"Another tail-piece, a Cupid on a snail. And page 230 is blank," said the journalist. "Then there are two more blank pages before we come to the word it is such joy to write when one is unhappily so happy as to be a novelist—'Conclusion!'"

CONCLUSION.

Never had the duchess been more lovely; she came from her bath clothed like a goddess, and on seeing

Adolphe voluptuously reclining on piles of cushions—

“You are beautiful,” said she.

“And so are you, Olympia!”

“And you still love me?”

“More and more,” said he.

“Ah, none but a Frenchman knows how to love!” cried the duchess. “Do you love me well to-night?”

“Yes.”

“Then come!”

And with an impulse of love and hate—whether it was that Cardinal Borborigano had reminded her of her husband, or that she felt unwonted passion to display, she pressed the springs and held out her arms.

“That is all,” said Lousteau, “for the foreman has torn off the rest in wrapping up my proofs. But it is enough to show that the author was full of promise.”

“I cannot make head or tail of it,” said Gatien Boirouge, who was the first to break the silence of the party from San-cerre.

“Nor I,” replied Monsieur Gravier.

“And yet it is a novel of the time of the Empire,” said Lousteau.

“By the way in which the brigand is made to speak,” said Monsieur Gravier, “it is evident that the author knew nothing of Italy. Banditti do not allow themselves such graceful conceits.”

Madame Gorju came up to Bianchon, seeing him pensive, and with a glance toward her daughter, Mademoiselle Euphémie Gorju, the owner of a fairly good fortune—“What a rhodomontade!” said she. “The prescriptions you write are worth more than all that rubbish.”

The mayoress had elaborately worked up this speech, which, in her opinion, showed strong judgment.

"Well, madame, we must be lenient, we have but twenty pages out of a thousand," said Bianchon, looking at Made-moiselle Gorju, whose figure threatened terrible things after the birth of her first child.

"Well, Monsieur de Clagny," said Lousteau, "we were talking yesterday of the forms of revenge invented by husbands. What do you say to those invented by wives?"

"I say," replied the public prosecutor, "that the romance is not by a councilor of State, but by a woman. For extravagant inventions the imagination of women far outdoes that of men; witness 'Frankenstein' by Mrs. Shelley, 'Leone Leoni' by George Sand, the works of Anne Radcliffe, and the 'Nouveau Prométhée' (New Prometheus) of Camille de Maupin."

Dinah looked steadily at Monsieur de Clagny, making him feel, by an expression that gave him a chill, that, in spite of the illustrious examples he had quoted, she regarded this as a reflection on Paquita la Sevillane.

Pooh!" said little La Baudraye, "the Duke of Bracciano, whom his wife puts into a cage, and to whom she shows herself every night in the arms of her lover, will kill her—and do you call that revenge? Our laws and our society are far more cruel."

"How so?" asked Lousteau.

"Why, little La Baudraye is talking!" said Monsieur Boirouge to his wife.

"Why, the woman is left to live on a small allowance, the world turns its back on her, she has no more finery, and no respect paid her—the two things which, in my opinion, are the sum-total of woman," said the suddenly revived little old man.

"But she has happiness!" said Madame de La Baudraye sententiously.

"No," said the master of the house, lighting his candle to go to bed, "for she has a lover!"

"For a man who thinks of nothing but his vine-stocks and poles, he has some spunk!" said Lousteau.

"Well, he must have something!" replied Bianchon.

Madame de La Baudraye, the only person who could hear Bianchon's remark, laughed so knowingly, and at the same time so bitterly, that the physician could guess the mystery of this woman's life; her premature wrinkles had been puzzling him all day.

But Dinah did not guess, on her part, the ominous prophecy contained for her in her husband's little speech, which her kind old Abbé Duret, if he had been alive, would not have failed to elucidate. Little La Baudraye had detected in Dinah's eyes, when she glanced at the journalist returning the ball of his jests, that swift and luminous flash of tenderness which gilds the gleam of a woman's eye when prudence is cast to the winds, and she is fairly carried away. Dinah paid no more heed to her husband's hint to her to observe the proprieties than Lousteau had done to Dinah's significant warnings on the day of his arrival.

Any other man than Bianchon would have been surprised at Lousteau's immediate success; but he was so much the doctor, that he was not even nettled at Dinah's marked preference for the newspaper- rather than the prescription-writer! In fact, Dinah, herself famous, was naturally more alive to wit than to fame. Love generally prefers contrast to similitude. Everything was against the physician—his frankness, his simplicity, and his profession. And this is why: women who want to love—and Dinah wanted to love as much as to be loved—have an instinctive aversion for men who are devoted to an absorbing occupation; in spite of superiority, they are all women in the matter of encroachment. Lousteau, a poet and journalist, and a libertine with a veneer of misanthropy, had that tinsel of the intellect, and led the half-idle life that

attracts women. The blunt good sense and keen insight of the really great man weighed upon Dinah, who would not confess her own smallness even to herself. She said in her mind—"The doctor is perhaps the better man, but I do not like him."

Then, again, she reflected on his professional duties, wondering whether a woman could ever be anything but a *subject* to a medical man, who saw so many subjects in the course of a day's work. The first sentence of the aphorism written by Bianchon in her album was a medical observation striking so directly at woman, that Dinah could not fail to be hit by it. And then Bianchon was leaving on the morrow; his practice required his return. What woman, short of having Cupid's mythological dart in her heart, could decide in so short a time?

These little things—which lead to such great catastrophes—having been seen in a mass by Bianchon, he pronounced the verdict he had come to as to Madame de La Baudraye in a few words to Lousteau, to the journalist's great amazement.

While the two friends stood talking together, a storm was gathering in the Sancerre circle, who could not in the least understand Lousteau's paraphrases and commentaries, and who vented it on their hostess. Far from finding in his talk the romance which the public prosecutor, the sub-prefect, the presiding judge, and his deputy, Lebas, had discovered there—to say nothing of Monsieur de La Baudraye and Dinah—the ladies now gathered round the tea-table, took the matter as a practical joke, and accused the Muse of Sancerre of having a finger in it. They had all looked forward to a delightful evening, and had all in vain strained every faculty of their minds. Nothing makes provincial folk so angry as the notion of having been a laughing-stock for Paris folk.

Madame Piédefer left the table to say to her daughter: "Do go and talk to the ladies; they are quite annoyed by your behavior."

Lousteau could not fail to see Dinah's great superiority

over the best women of Sancerre; she was better dressed, her movements were graceful, her complexion was exquisitely white by candle-light—in short, she stood out against this background of old faces, shy and ill-dressed girls, like a queen in the midst of her court. Visions of Paris faded from his brain; Lousteau was accepting the provincial surroundings; and while he had too much imagination to remain unimpressed by the royal splendor of this castle, the beautiful carvings, and the antique beauty of the rooms, he had also too much experience to overlook the value of the personality which completed this gem of the Renaissance. So by the time when the visitors from Sancerre had taken their leave one by one—for they had an hour's drive before them—when no one remained in the drawing-room but Monsieur de Clagny, Monsieur Lebas, Gatien, and Monsieur Gravier, who were all to sleep at Anzy—the journalist had already changed his mind about Dinah. His opinion had gone through the evolution that Madame de La Baudraye had so audaciously prophesied at their first meeting.

“Ah, what things they will say about us on the drive home!” cried the mistress of the house, as she returned to the drawing-room after seeing the president and his wife to their carriage with Madame and Mademoiselle Popinot-Chandier.

The rest of the evening had its pleasant side. In the intimacy of a small party each one brought to the conversation his contribution of epigrams on the figure the visitors from Sancerre had cut during Lousteau's comments on the paper wrapped round the proofs.

“My dear fellow,” said Bianchon to Lousteau as they went to bed—they had an enormous room with two beds in it—“you will be the happy man of this woman's choice—*née* Piédefer!”

“Do you think so?”

“It is quite natural. You are supposed here to have had

many mistresses in Paris; and to a woman there is something indescribably inviting in a man whom other women favor—something attractive and fascinating; is it that she prides herself on being longer remembered than all the rest? that she appeals to his experience, as a sick man will pay more to a famous physician? or that she is flattered by the revival of a world-worn heart?"

"Vanity and the senses count for so much in love affairs," said Lousteau, "that there may be some truth in all those hypotheses. However, if I remain, it will be in consequence of the certificate of innocence, without ignorance, that you have given Dinah. She is handsome, is she not?"

"Love will make her beautiful," said the doctor. "And, after all, she will be a rich widow some day or other! And a child would secure her the life-interest in the Master of La Baudraye's fortune——"

"Why, it is quite an act of virtue to make love to her," said Lousteau, rolling himself up in the bed-clothes, "and to-morrow, with your help—yes, to-morrow, I—well, good-night."

On the following day, Madame de La Baudraye, to whom her husband had six months since given a pair of horses, which he also used in the fields, and an old carriage that rattled on the road, decided that she would take Bianchon so far on his way as Cosne, where he would get into the Lyons diligence as it passed through. She also took her mother and Lousteau, but she intended to drop her mother at La Baudraye to go on to Cosne with the two Parisians, and return alone with Étienne. She was elegantly dressed, as the journalist at once perceived—bronze kid shoes, gray silk stockings, a muslin dress, a green silk scarf with shaded fringe at the ends, and a pretty, black lace bonnet with flowers in it. As to Lousteau, the wretch had assumed his war-paint—patent-leather shoes, trousers of English kerseymere with pleats in front, a very open vest showing a particularly fine shirt and

the black brocade waterfall of his handsomest cravat, and a very thin, very short, black riding-coat.

Monsieur de Clagny and Monsieur Gravier looked at each other, feeling rather silly as they beheld the two Parisians in the carriage, while they, like two simpletons, were left standing at the foot of the steps. Monsieur de La Baudraye, who stood at the top waving his little hand in a little farewell to the doctor, could not forbear from smiling as he heard Monsieur de Clagny say to Monsieur Gravier—

“You should have escorted them on horseback.”

At this juncture Gatien, riding Monsieur de La Baudraye’s quiet little mare, came out of the side-road from the stables and joined the party in the chaise.

“Ah, good!” said the receiver-general, “the boy has mounted guard.”

“What a bore!” cried Dinah as she saw Gatien. “In thirteen years—for I have been married nearly thirteen years—I have never had three hours’ liberty.”

“Married, madame?” said the journalist with a smile. “You remind me of a saying of Michaud’s—he was so witty! He was setting out for the Holy Land, and his friends were remonstrating with him, urging his age, and the perils of such an expedition. ‘And then,’ said one, ‘you are married.’ ‘Married!’ said he, ‘so little married.’”

Even the rigid Madame Piédefer could not repress a smile.

“I should not be surprised to see Monsieur de Clagny mounted on my pony to complete the escort,” said Dinah.

“Well, if the public prosecutor does not pursue us, you can get rid of this little fellow at Sancerre. Bianchon must, of course, have left something behind on his table—the notes for the first lecture of his course—and you can ask Gatien to go back to Anzy to fetch it.”

This simple little plot put Madame de La Baudraye into high spirits. From the road between Anzy to Sancerre a glorious landscape frequently comes into view, of the noble

stretches of the Loire looking like a lake, and it was got over very pleasantly, for Dinah was happy in finding herself well understood. Love was discussed in theory, a subject allowing lovers in secret to take the measure, as it were, of each other's heart. The journalist took a tone of refined corruption to prove that love obeys no law, that the character of the lovers gives infinite variety to its incidents, that the circumstances of social life add to the multiplicity of its manifestations, that in love all is possible and true, and that any given woman, after resisting every temptation and the seductions of the most passionate lover, may be carried off her feet in the course of a few hours by a fancy, an internal whirlwind of which God alone would ever know the secret !

"Why," said he, "is not that the key to all the adventures we have talked over these three days past ?"

For these three days, indeed, Dinah's lively imagination had been full of the most insidious romances, and the conversation of the two Parisians had affected the woman as the most mischievous reading might have done. Lousteau watched the effects of this clever manœuvre to seize the moment when his prey, whose readiness to be caught was hidden under the abstraction caused by fatal irresolution, should be rendered quite dizzy.

Dinah wished to show La Baudraye to her two visitors, and the farce was duly played out of remembering the papers left by Bianchon in his rooms at Anzy. Gatien flew off at a gallop to obey his sovereign ; Madame Piédefer went to do some shopping in Sancerre ; and Dinah went on to Cosne alone with the two friends. Lousteau took his seat by the lady, Bianchon riding backward. The two friends talked affectionately and with deep compassion for the fate of this choice nature so ill understood and in the midst of such vulgar surroundings. Bianchon served Lousteau well by making fun of the public prosecutor, of Monsieur Gravier, and of Gatien ; there was a tone of such genuine contempt in his remarks

that Madame de La Baudraye dared not take the part of her adorers.

"I perfectly understand the position you have maintained," said the doctor as they crossed the Loire. "You were inaccessible excepting to that brain-love which often leads to heart-love; and not one of those men, it is very certain, is capable of disguising what, at an early stage of life, is disgusting to the senses in the eyes of a refined woman. To you, now, love is indispensable."

"Indispensable!" cried Dinah, looking curiously at the doctor. "Do you mean that you prescribe love to me?"

"If you go on living as you live now, in three years you will be hideous," replied Bianchon in a dictatorial tone.

"Monsieur!" said Madame de La Baudraye, almost frightened.

"Forgive my friend," said Lousteau, half jestingly. "He is always the medical man, and to him love is merely a question of hygiene. But he is quite disinterested—it is for your sake only that he speaks—as is evident, since he is starting in an hour——"

At Cosne a little crowd gathered round the old repainted chaise, with the arms on the panels granted by Louis XIV. to the new La Baudraye. Gules, a pair of scales or; on a chief azure (color on color) three cross-crosslets argent. For supporters two greyhounds argent, collared azure, chained or. The ironical motto: *Deo sic patet fides et hominibus*, had been inflicted on the converted Calvinist by Monsieur d'Hozier the satirical.

"Let us get out; they will come and find us," said the baroness, desiring her coachman to keep watch.

Dinah took Bianchon's arm, and the doctor set off by the banks of the Loire at so rapid a pace that the journalist had to linger behind. The physician had explained by a single wink that he meant to do Lousteau a good turn.

"You have been attracted by Étienne," said Bianchon to

Dinah; "he has appealed strongly to your imagination; last night we were talking about you. He loves you. But he is frivolous, and difficult to hold; his poverty compels him to live in Paris, while everything condemns you to live at Sancerre. Take a lofty view of life. Make Lousteau your friend; do not ask too much of him; he will come three times a year to spend a few days with you, and you will owe to him your beauty, happiness, and fortune. Monsieur de La Baudraye may live to be a hundred; but he might die in a few days if he should leave off the flannel winding-sheet in which he swathes himself. So run no risks, be prudent both of you. Say not a word—I have read your heart."

Madame de La Baudraye was defenseless under this serried attack, and in the presence of a man who spoke at once as a doctor, a confessor, and confidential friend.

"Indeed!" said she. "Can you suppose that any woman would care to compete with a journalist's mistresses? Monsieur Lousteau strikes me as agreeable and witty; but he is *blasé*, etc., etc.——"

Dinah had turned back, and was obliged to check the flow of words by which she tried to disguise her intentions; for Étienne, who seemed to be studying progress in Cosne, was coming to meet them.

"Believe me," said Bianchon, "what he wants is to be truly loved; and if he alters his course of life, it will be to the benefit of his talent."

Dinah's coachman hurried up breathlessly to say that the diligence had come in, and they walked on quickly, Madame de La Baudraye between the two men.

"Farewell, my children!" said Bianchon, before they got into the town, "you have my blessing!"

He released Madame de La Baudraye's hand from his arm, and allowed Lousteau to draw it into his, with a tender look, as he pressed it to his heart. What a difference to Dinah! Étienne's arm thrilled her deeply. Bianchon's had not stirred

her in the least. She and the journalist exchanged one of those glowing looks that are more than an avowal.

"Only provincial women wear lawn gowns in these days," thought Lousteau to himself, "the only stuff which shows every crease. This woman, who has chosen me for her lover, will make a fuss over her frock! If she had but put on a foulard skirt, I should be happy. What is the meaning of these difficulties——?"

While Lousteau was wondering whether Dinah had put on a lawn gown on purpose to protect herself by an insuperable obstacle, Bianchon, with the help of the coachman, was seeing his luggage piled on the diligence. Finally, he came to take leave of Dinah, who was excessively friendly with him.

"Go home, Madame la Baronne, leave me here—Gatien will be coming," he added in an undertone. "It is getting late," said he aloud. "Adieu!"

"Adieu—great man!" cried Lousteau, shaking hands with Bianchon.

When the journalist and Madame de La Baudraye, side by side in the rickety old chaise, had recrossed the Loire, they both were unready to speak. In these circumstances, the first words that break the pregnant silence are full of deep and terrible meaning.

"Do you know how much I love you?" said the journalist point blank.

Victory might gratify Lousteau, but defeat could cause him no grief. This indifference was the secret of his audacity. He took Madame de La Baudraye's hand as he spoke these decisive words, and pressed it in both his; but Dinah gently released it.

"Yes, I am as good as an actress or a *grisette*," she said in a voice that trembled, though she spoke lightly. "But can you suppose that a woman who, in spite of her absurdities, has some intelligence, will have reserved the best treasures of her heart for a man who will regard her merely as a transient

pleasure? I am not surprised to hear from your lips the words which so many men have said to me—but——”

The coachman turned round.

“Here comes Monsieur Gatien,” said he.

“I love you, I will have you, you shall be mine, for I have never felt for any woman the passion I have for you!” said Lousteau in her ear.

“In spite of my will, perhaps?” said she, with a smile.

“At least you must seem to have been assaulted to save my honor,” said the Parisian, to whom the fatal immaculateness of clean India muslin suggested a ridiculous notion.

Before Gatien had reached the end of the bridge, the outrageous journalist had crumpled up Madame de La Baudraye’s lawn dress to such effect that she was absolutely not presentable.

“Oh, monsieur!” she exclaimed in dignified reproof.

“You defied me,” said the Parisian.

But Gatien now rode up with the vehemence of a duped lover. To regain a little of Madame de La Baudraye’s esteem, Lousteau did his best to hide the tumbled dress from Gatien’s eyes by leaning out of the chaise to speak to him from Dinah’s side.

“Go back to our inn,” said he, “there is still time; the diligence does not start for half an hour. The papers are on the table of the room Bianchon was in; he wants them most particularly, for he will be completely lost without his notes for the lecture.”

“Pray go, Gatien,” said Dinah to her young adorer, with an imperious glance. And the boy thus commanded turned his horse and was off with a loose rein.

“Go quickly to La Baudraye,” cried Lousteau to the coachman. “Madame is not well—— Your mother only will know the secret of my trick,” added he, taking his seat by Dinah.

“You call such infamous conduct a trick?” cried Madame

de La Baudraye, swallowing down a few tears that dried up with the fire of outraged pride.

She leaned back in the corner of the chaise, crossed her arms, and gazed out at the Loire and the landscape, at anything rather than at Lousteau. The journalist put on his most ingratiating tone, and talked till they reached La Baudraye, where Dinah fled indoors, trying not to be seen by any one. In her agitation she threw herself on a sofa and burst into tears.

"If I am an object of horror to you, of aversion or scorn, I will go," said Lousteau, who had followed her. And he threw himself at her feet.

It was at this crisis that Madame Piédefer came in, saying to her daughter—

"What is the matter? What has happened?"

"Give your daughter another dress at once," said the audacious Parisian in the prim old lady's ear.

Hearing the mad gallop of Gatien's horse, Madame de La Baudraye fled to her bedroom, followed by her mother.

"There are no papers at the inn," said Gatien to Lousteau, who went out to meet him.

"And you found none at the Château d'Anzy either?" replied Lousteau.

"You have been making a fool of me," said Gatien, in a cold set voice.

"Quite so," replied Lousteau. "Madame de La Baudraye was greatly annoyed by your choosing to follow her without being invited. Believe me, to bore a woman is a bad way of courting her. Dinah has played you a trick, and you have given her a laugh; it is more than any of you has done in these thirteen years past. You owe that success to Bianchon, for your cousin was the author of the farce of 'The Manuscript.' Will the horse get over it?" asked Lousteau with a laugh, while Gatien was wondering whether to be angry or not.

"The horse!" said Gatien.

At this moment Madame de La Baudraye came in, dressed in a velvet gown, and accompanied by her mother, who shot angry flashes at Lousteau. It would have been too rash for Dinah to seem cold or severe to Lousteau in Gatien's presence; and Étienne, taking advantage of this, offered his arm to the supposed Lucretia; however, she declined it.

"Do you mean to cast off a man who has vowed to live for you?" said he, walking close beside her. "I shall stop at Sancerre and go home to-morrow."

"Are you coming, mamma?" said Madame de La Baudraye to Madame Piédefer, thus avoiding a reply to the direct challenge by which Lousteau was forcing her to a decision.

Lousteau handed the mother into the chaise, he helped Madame de La Baudraye by gently taking her arm, and he and Gatien took the front seat, leaving the saddle horse at La Baudraye.

"You have changed your gown," said Gatien, blunderingly, to Dinah.

"Madame la Baronne was chilled by the cool air off the river," replied Lousteau. "Bianchon advised her to put on a warm dress."

Dinah turned as red as a poppy, and Madame Piédefer assumed a stern expression.

"Poor Bianchon! he is on the road to Paris. A noble soul!" said Lousteau.

"Oh yes!" cried Madame de La Baudraye, "he is high-minded, full of delicate feeling——"

"We were in such good spirits when we set out," said Lousteau; "now you are overdone, and you speak to me so bitterly—why? Are you not accustomed to being told how handsome and how clever you are? For my part, I say boldly, before Gatien, I give up Paris; I mean to stay at Sancerre and swell the number of your gallant slaves. I feel so young again in my native district; I have quite forgotten Paris and

all its wickedness, and its bores, and its wearisome pleasures. Yes, my life seems in a way purified."

Dinah allowed Lousteau to talk without even looking at him; but at last there was a moment when this serpent's rhodomontade was really so inspired by the effort he made to affect passion in phrases and ideas of which the meaning, though hidden from Gatien, found a loud response in Dinah's heart, that she raised her eyes to his. This look seemed to crown Lousteau's joy; his wit flowed more freely, and at last he made Madame de La Baudraye laugh. When, under circumstances which so seriously compromise her pride, a woman has been made to laugh, she is finally committed.

As they drove in by the spacious graveled forecourt, with its lawn in the middle, and the large vases filled with flowers which so well set off the facade of Anzy, the journalist was saying:

"When women love, they forgive everything, even our crimes; when they do not love, they cannot forgive anything—not even our virtues. Do you forgive me," he added in Madame de La Baudraye's ear, and pressing her arm to his heart with tender emphasis. And Dinah could not help smiling.

All through dinner and for the rest of the evening Étienne was in the most delightful spirits, inexhaustibly cheerful; but while thus giving vent to his intoxication, he now and then fell into the dreamy abstraction of a man who seems rapt in his own happiness.

After coffee had been served, Madame de La Baudraye and her mother left the men to wander about the gardens. Monsieur Gravier then remarked to Monsieur de Clagny:

"Did you observe that Madame de La Baudraye, after going out in a lawn gown came home in a velvet one?"

"As she got into the carriage at Cosne, the lawn dress caught on a brass nail and was torn all the way down," replied Lousteau.

"Oh!" exclaimed Gatien, stricken to the heart by hearing two such different explanations.

The journalist, who understood, took Gatien by the arm and pressed it as a hint to him to be silent. A few minutes later Étienne left Dinah's three adorers and took possession of little La Baudraye. Then Gatien was cross-questioned as to the events of the day. Monsier Gravier and Monsieur de Clagny were dismayed to hear that on the return from Cosne Lousteau had been alone with Dinah, and even more so on hearing the two versions explaining the lady's change of dress. And the three discomfited gentlemen were in a very awkward position for the rest of the evening.

Next day each, on various business, was obliged to leave Anzy; Dinah remained with her mother, Lousteau, and her husband. The annoyance vented by the three victims gave rise to an organized rebellion in Sancerre. The surrender of the Muse of Le Berry, of the Nivernais, and of Morvan was the cause of a perfect hue and cry of slander, evil report, and various guesses in which the story of the muslin gown held a prominent place. No dress Dinah had ever worn had been so much commented on, or was half as interesting to the girls, who could not conceive what the connection might be, that made the married women laugh, between love and an India muslin gown.

Madame the Presidente Boirouge, furious at her son's discomfiture, forgot the praise she had lavished on the poem of "Paquita," and fulminated terrific condemnation on the woman who could publish such a disgraceful work.

"The wretched woman commits every crime she writes about," said she. "Perhaps she will come to the same end as her heroine!"

Dinah's fate among the good folk of Sancerre was like that of Marshal Soult in the opposition newspapers: as long as he is minister he lost the battle of Toulouse; whenever he is out of the Government he won it! While she was virtuous,

Dinah was a match for Camille de Maupin, a rival of the most famous women; but as soon as she was happy, she was an *unhappy creature*.

Monsieur de Clagny was her valiant champion; he went several times to the Castle of Anzy to acquire the right to contradict the rumors current as to the woman he still faithfully adored, even in her fall; and he maintained that she and Lousteau were engaged together on some great work. But the lawyer was laughed to scorn.

The month of October was lovely; autumn is the finest season in the valley of the Loire; but in 1836 it was unusually glorious. Nature seemed to aid and abet Dinah, who, as Bianchon had predicted, gradually developed a heart-felt passion. In one month she was an altered woman. She was surprised to find in herself so many inert and dormant qualities, hitherto in abeyance. To her Lousteau seemed an angel; for heart-love, the crowning need of a great nature, had made a new woman of her. Dinah was alive! She had found an outlet for her powers, she saw undreamed-of vistas in the future—in short, she was happy, happy without alarms or hindrances. The vast castle, the gardens, the park, the forest, favored love!

Lousteau found in Madame de La Baudraye an artlessness, nay, if you will, an innocence of mind which made her very original; there was much more of the unexpected and winning in her than in a girl. Lousteau was quite alive to a form of flattery which in most women is assumed, but which in Dinah was genuine; she really learned from him the ways of love; he really was the first to reign in her heart. And, indeed, he took the trouble to be exceedingly amiable.

Men, like women, have a stock in hand of recitatives, of *cantabile*, of *nocturnes*, *arias* and *refrains*—shall we say of recipes, although we speak of love—which each one believes to be exclusively his own. Men who have reached Lousteau's age try to distribute the "movements" of this repertoire through

the whole opera of a passion. Lousteau, regarding this adventure with Dinah as a mere temporary connection, was eager to stamp himself on her memory in indelible lines; and during that beautiful October he was prodigal of his most entrancing melodies and most elaborate *barcarolles*. In fact, he exhausted every resource of the stage management of love, to use an expression borrowed from the theatrical dictionary, and admirably descriptive of his manœuvres.

"If that woman ever forgets me!" he would sometimes say to himself as they returned together from a long walk in the woods, "I will owe her no grudge—she will have found something better."

When two beings have sung together all the duets of that enchanting score, and still love each other, it may be said that they love truly.

Lousteau, however, had not time to repeat himself, for he was to leave Anzy in the early days of November. His paper required his presence in Paris. Before breakfast, on the day before he was to leave, the journalist and Dinah saw the master of the house come in with an artist from Nevers, who restored carvings of all kinds.

"What are you going to do?" asked Lousteau. "What is to be done to the castle?"

"This is what I am going to do," said the little man, leading Lousteau, the local artist, and Dinah out on the terrace.

He pointed out, on the front of the building, a shield supported by two sirens, not unlike that which may be seen on the arcade, now closed, through which there used to be a passage from the Quai des Tuileries to the courtyard of the old Louvre, and over which the words may still be seen, "*Bibliothèque du Cabinet du Roi*." (Library of the King's Cabinet.) This shield bore the arms of the noble House of Uxelles, namely: or and gules party per fess, with two lions or, dexter and sinister as supporters. Above, a knight's helm, mantled

of the tincture of the shield, and surmounted by a ducal coronet. Motto, *Cy paroist !* A proud and sonorous device.

"I want to put my own coat-of-arms in the place of that of the Uxelles; and as they are repeated six times on the two fronts and the two wings, it is not a trifling affair."

"Your arms, so new, and since 1830!" exclaimed Dinah.

"Have I not created an entail?"

"I could understand it if you had children," said the journalist.

"Oh!" said the old man, "Madame de La Baudraye is still young; there is no time lost."

This illusion made Lousteau smile; he did not understand Monsieur de La Baudraye.

"There, Didine!" said he in Dinah's ear, "what a waste of remorse!"

Dinah begged him to give her one day more, and the lovers parted after the manner of certain theatres, which give ten last performances of a piece that is paying. And how many promises they made! How many solemn pledges did not Dinah exact and the unblushing journalist give her.

Dinah, with the superiority of the Superior Woman, accompanied Lousteau, in the face of all the world, as far as Cosne, with her mother and little La Baudraye. When, ten days later, Madame de La Baudraye saw in her drawing-room at La Baudraye Monsieur de Clagny, Gatien, and Gravier, she found an opportunity of saying to each in turn:

"I owe it to Monsieur Lousteau that I discovered that I had not been loved for my own sake."

And what noble speeches she uttered, on man, on the nature of his feelings, on the end of his base passions, and so forth. Of Dinah's three worshipers, Monsieur de Clagny only said to her—"I love you, come what may"—and Dinah accepted him as her confidant, lavished on him all the marks of friendship which women can devise for the Gurths who are ready thus to wear the collar of gilded slavery.

In Paris once more, Lousteau had, in a few weeks, lost the impression of the happy time he had spent at the Anzy castle. This is why: Lousteau lived by his pen.

In this century, especially since the triumph of the *bourgeoisie*—the commonplace, money-saving citizen—who takes good care not to imitate Francis I. or Louis XIV.*—to live by the pen is a form of penal servitude to which a galley-slave would prefer death. To live by the pen means to create—to create to-day, and to-morrow, and incessantly—or to seem to create; and the imitation costs as dear as the reality. So, beside his daily contribution to a newspaper, which was like the stone of Sisyphus, and which came every Monday, crashing down on to the feather of his pen. Étienne worked for three or four literary magazines. Still, do not be alarmed; he put no artistic conscientiousness into his work. This man of Sancerre had a facility, a carelessness, if you call it so, which ranked him with those writers who are mere scriveners, literary hacks. In Paris, in our day, hack-work cuts a man off from every pretension to a literary position. When he can do no more, or no longer cares for advancement, the man who can write becomes a journalist and a hack.

The life he leads is not unpleasant. Blue-stockings, beginners in every walk of life, actresses at the outset or at the close of a career, publishers and authors, all make much of these writers of the ready pen. Lousteau, a thorough man-about-town, lived at scarcely any expense beyond paying his rent. He had boxes at all the theatres; the sale of the books he reviewed or left unreviewed paid for his gloves; and he would say to those authors who published at their own expense: "I have your book always in my hands!" He took toll from vanity in the form of drawings or pictures. Every day had its engagements to dinner, every night its theatre, every morning was filled up with callers, visits, and lounging. His serial in the paper, two novels a year for weekly magazines, and his

* The reign of each of these kings was ruinous to France.

miscellaneous article were the tax he paid for this easy-going life. And yet, to reach this position, Étienne had struggled for ten years.

At the present time, known to the literary world, liked for the good or the mischief he did with equally facile good-humor, he let himself float with the stream, never caring for the future. He ruled a little set of new-comers, he had friendships, or rather, habits of fifteen years' standing, and men with whom he supped, and dined, and indulged his wit. He earned from seven to eight hundred francs a month, a sum which he found quite insufficient for the prodigality peculiar to the impecunious. Indeed, Lousteau found himself now just as hard up as when, on first appearing in Paris, he had said to himself: "If I had but five hundred francs a month, I should be rich!"

The cause of this phenomenon was as follows: Lousteau lived in the Rue des Martyrs in pretty first-floor rooms with a garden, and splendidly furnished. When he settled there in 1833 he had come to an agreement with an upholsterer that kept his pocket-money low for a long time. These rooms were let for twelve hundred francs. The months of January, April, July, and October were, as he phrased it, his indigent months. The rent and the porter's account cleaned him out. Lousteau took no fewer hackney-cabs, spent a hundred francs in breakfasts, all the same, smoked thirty francs' worth of cigars, and could never refuse the mistress of a day a dinner or a new dress. He thus dipped so deeply into the fluctuating earnings of the following months that he could no more find a hundred francs on his chimney-piece now, when he was making seven or eight hundred francs a month, than he could in 1822, when he was hardly getting two hundred.

Tired, sometimes, by the incessant vicissitudes of a literary life, and as much bored by amusement as a courtesan, Lousteau would get out of the tideway and sit on the bank, and say to one and another of his intimate allies—Nathan or Bixiou,

as they sat smoking in his scrap of garden, looking out on an evergreen lawn as big as a dining-table—

“What will be the end of us? White hairs are giving us respectful hints!”

“Lord! we shall marry when we choose to give as much thought to the matter as we give to a drama or a novel,” said Nathan.

“And Florine?” retorted Bixiou.

“Oh, we all have a Florine,” said Étienne, flinging away the end of his cigar and thinking of Madame Schontz.*

Madame Schontz was a pretty enough woman to put a very high price on the interest on her beauty, while reserving absolute ownership for Lousteau, the man of her heart. Like all those women who got the name in Paris of *Lorettes*, from the church of Notre-Dame de Lorette round about which they dwell, she lived in the Rue Fléchier, a stone’s throw from Lousteau. This lady took a pride and delight in teasing her friends by boasting of having a Wit for her lover.

These details of Lousteau’s life and fortune are indispensable, for this penury and this bohemian existence of a man to whom Parisian luxury had become a necessity were fated to have a cruel influence on Dinah’s life. Those to whom the bohemia of Paris is familiar will now understand how it was that, by the end of a fortnight, the journalist, up to his ears in the literary environment, could laugh about his baroness with his friends and even with Madame Schontz. To such readers as regard such doings as utterly mean, it is almost useless to make excuses which they will not accept.

“What did you do at Sancerre?” asked Bixiou the first time he met Lousteau.

“I did good service to three worthy provincials—a receiver-general of taxes, a little cousin of his, and a public prosecutor, who for ten years had been dancing round and round one of the hundred ‘Tenth Muses’ who adorn the department,”

* See “Beatrix.”

said he. "But they had no more dared to touch her than we touch a decorated cream at dessert till some strong-minded person has made a hole in it."

"Poor boy!" said Bixiou. "I said you had gone to Sancerre to turn Pegasus out to grass."

"Your joke is as stupid as my Muse is handsome," retorted Lousteau. "Ask Bianchon, my dear fellow."

"A Muse and Poet! A homœopathic cure then!" said Bixiou.

On the tenth day Lousteau received a letter with the Sancerre post-mark.

"Good! very good!" said Lousteau.

"'Beloved friend, idol of my heart and soul——' twenty pages of it! all at one sitting, and dated midnight! She writes when she finds herself alone. Poor woman! Ah, ha! And a postscript—

"'I dare not ask you to write to me as I write, every day; still, I hope to have a few lines from my dear one every week, to relieve my mind.' What a pity to burn it all! it is really well written," said Lousteau to himself, as he threw the ten sheets of paper into the fire after having read them. "That woman was born to reel off copy!"

Lousteau was not much afraid of Madame Schontz, who really loved him for himself; but he had supplanted a friend in the heart of a marquise. This marquise, a lady nowise coy, sometimes dropped in unexpectedly at his rooms in the evening, arriving veiled in a hackney-coach; and she, as a literary woman, allowed herself to hunt through all his drawers.

A week later, Lousteau, who hardly remembered Dinah, was startled by another budget from Sancerre—eight leaves, sixteen pages! He heard a woman's step; he thought it announced a search from the marquise, and tossed these rapturous and entrancing proofs of affection into the fire—unread!

"A woman's letter!" exclaimed Madame Schontz as she came in. "The paper, the wax, are scented——"

"Here you are, sir," said a porter from the coach office, setting down two huge hampers in the anteroom. "Carriage paid. Please to sign my book."

"Carriage paid!" cried Madame Schontz. "It must have come from Sancerre."

"Yes, madame," said the porter.

"Your Tenth Muse is a remarkably intelligent woman," said the courtesan, opening one of the hampers, while Lousteau was writing his name. "I like a Muse who understands housekeeping, and who can make game-pies as well as blots. And, oh! what beautiful flowers!" she went on, opening the second hamper. "Why, you could get none finer in Paris! And here, and here! A hare, partridges, half a roebuck! We will ask your friends and have a famous dinner, for Athalie has a special talent for dressing venison."

Lousteau wrote to Dinah; but instead of writing from the heart, he was clever. The letter was all the more insidious; it was like one of Mirabeau's letters to Sophie. The style of a true lover is transparent. It is a clear stream which allows the bottom of the heart to be seen between two banks, bright with the trifles of existence, and covered with the flowers of the soul that blossom afresh every day, full of intoxicating beauty—but only for two beings. As soon as a love letter has any charm for a third reader, it is beyond doubt the product of the head, not of the heart. But a woman will always be beguiled; she always believes herself to be the determining cause of this flow of wit.

By the end of December Lousteau had ceased to read Dinah's letters; they lay in a heap in a drawer of his chest that was never locked, under his shirts, which they scented.

Then one of those chances came to Lousteau which such bohemians ought to clutch by every hair. In the middle of December, Madame Schontz, who took a real interest in Étienne, sent to beg him to call on her one morning on business.

"My dear fellow, you have a chance of marrying."

"I can marry very often, happily, my dear."

"When I say marrying, I mean marrying well. You have no prejudices: I need not mince matters. This is the position: A young lady has got into trouble; her mother knows nothing of even a kiss. Her father is an honest notary, a man of honor; he has been wise enough to keep it dark. He wants to get his daughter married within a fortnight, and he will give her a fortune of a hundred and fifty thousand francs—for he has three other children; but—and it is not a bad idea—he will add a hundred thousand francs, under the rose, hand to hand, to cover the damages. They are an old family of Paris citizens, Rue des Lombards——"

"Well, then, why does not the lover marry her?"

"Dead."

"What a romance! Such things are nowhere to be heard of but in the Rue des Lombards——"

"But do not take it into your head that a jealous brother murdered the seducer. The young man died in the most commonplace way of a pleurisy caught as he came out of the theatre. A head-clerk and penniless, the man entrapped the daughter in order to marry into the business. A judgment from heaven, I call it!"

"Where did you hear the story?"

"From Malaga; the notary is her *milord*."

"What, Cardot, the son of that little old man in hair-powder, Florentine's first friend?"

"Just so. Malaga, whose 'fancy' is a little tomtit of a fiddler of eighteen, cannot in conscience make such a boy marry the girl. Beside, she has no cause to do him an ill turn. Indeed, Monsieur Cardot wants a man of thirty at least. Our notary, I feel sure, will be proud to have a famous man for his son-in-law. So just feel yourself all over. You will pay your debts, you will have twelve thousand francs a year, and be a father without any trouble on your

part ; what do you say to that to the good ? And, after all, you only marry a very consolable widow. There is an income of fifty thousand francs in the house, and the value of the connection, so in due time you may look forward to not less than fifteen thousand francs a year more for your share, and you will enter a family holding a fine political position ; Cardot is the brother-in-law of old Camusot, the deputy who lived so long with Fanny Beaupré."

"Yes," said Lousteau, "old Camusot married little Daddy Cardot's eldest daughter ; they had high old times together !"

"Well !" Madame Schontz went on, "and Madame Cardot, the notary's wife, was a Chiffreville—manufacturers of chemical products, the aristocracy of these days ! Potash, I tell you ! Still, this is the unpleasant side of the matter. You will have a terrible mother-in-law, a woman capable of killing her daughter if she knew—— ! This Cardot woman is a bigot ; she has lips like two faded, narrow pink ribbons.

"A man of the town like you would never pass muster with that woman, who, in her well-meaning way, will spy out your bachelor life and know every fact of the past. However, Cardot says he means to exert his paternal authority. The poor man will be obliged to do the civil to his wife for some days ; a woman made of wood, my dear fellow ; Malaga, who has seen her, calls her a penitential scrubber. Cardot is a man of forty ; he will be mayor of his district, and perhaps be elected deputy. He is prepared to give in lieu of the hundred thousand francs a nice little house in the Rue Saint-Lazare, with a forecourt and a garden, which cost him no more than sixty thousand at the time of the July overthrow ; he would sell, and that would be an opportunity for you to go and come about the house, to see the daughter, and be civil to the mother. And it would give you a look of property in Madame Cardot's eyes. You would be housed like a prince in that little mansion. Then, by Camusot's interest, you may get an appointment as librarian to some public office where there is no library.

Well, and then if you invest your money in backing up a newspaper, you will get ten thousand francs a year on it, you can earn six, your librarianship will bring you in four. Can you do better for yourself?

"If you were to marry a lamb without spot, it might be a light woman by the end of two years. What is the damage?—an anticipated dividend! It is quite the fashion.

"Take my word for it, you can do no better than come to dine with Malaga to-morrow. You will meet your father-in-law; he will know the secret has been let out—by Malaga, with whom he cannot be angry—and then you are master of the situation. As to your wife! Why, her misconduct leaves you as free as a bachelor——"

"Your language is as blunt as a cannon-ball."

"I love you for your own sake, that is all. And I can reason. Well! why do you stand there like a wax image of Abd-el-Kader? There is nothing to meditate over. Marriage is heads or tails—well, you have tossed heads up."

"You shall have my reply to-morrow," said Lousteau.

"I would sooner have it at once; Malaga will write you up to-night."

"Well, then, yes."

Lousteau spent the evening in writing a long letter to the marquise, giving her the reasons which compelled him to marry: his constant poverty, the torpor of his imagination, his white hairs, his moral and physical exhaustion—in short, four pages of arguments. "As to Dinah, I will send her a circular announcing the marriage," said he to himself. "As Bixiou says, I have not my match for knowing how to dock the tail of a passion."

Lousteau, who at first had been on some ceremony with himself, by next day had come to the point of dreading lest the marriage should not come off. He was pressingly civil to the notary.

"I knew monsieur your father," said he, "at Florentine's,

so I may well know you here, at Mademoiselle Turquet's. Like father, like son. A very good fellow and a philosopher was little Daddy Cardot—excuse me, we always called him that. At that time, Florine, Florentine, Tullia, Coralie, and Mariette were the five fingers of your hand, so to speak—it is fifteen years ago. My follies, as you may suppose, are a thing of the past. In those days it was pleasure that ran away with me; now I am ambitious; but, in our day, to get on at all a man must be free from debt, have a good income, a wife, and a family. If I pay taxes enough to qualify me, I may be a deputy yet, like any other man."

Maître Cardot appreciated this profession of faith. Lous-teau had laid himself out to please, and the notary liked him, feeling himself more at his ease, as may be easily imagined, with a man who had known his father's secrets than he would have been with another. On the following day Lousteau was introduced to the Cardot family as the purchaser of the house in the Rue Saint-Lazare, and three days later Étienne dined there.

Cardot lived in an old house near the Place du Châtelet. In this house everything was "good." Economy covered every scrap of gilding with green gauze; all the furniture wore holland covers. Though it was impossible to feel a shade of uneasiness as to the wealth of the inhabitants, at the end of half an hour no one could suppress a yawn. Boredom perched in every nook; the curtains hung dolefully; the dining-room was like Harpagon's. Even if Lousteau had not known all about Malaga, he could have guessed that the notary's real life was spent elsewhere.

The journalist saw a tall, fair girl with blue eyes, at once shy and languishing. The elder brother took a fancy to him; he was the fourth clerk in the office, but strongly attracted by the snares of literary fame, though destined to succeed his father. The younger sister was twelve years old. Lousteau, assuming a little jesuitical air, played the Monarchist and

churchman for the benefit of the mother, was quiet, smooth, deliberate, and complimentary.

Within three weeks of their introduction, at his fourth dinner there, Félicie Cardot, who had been watching Lousteau out of the corner of her eye, carried him a cup of coffee where he stood in the window recess, and said in a low voice, with tears in her eyes—

“I will devote my whole life, monsieur, to thanking you for your sacrifice in favor of a poor girl——”

Lousteau was touched ; there was so much expression in her look, her accent, her attitude. “She would make a good man happy,” thought he, pressing her hand in reply.

Madame Cardot looked upon her son-in-law as a man with a future before him ; but, above all the fine qualities she ascribed to him, she was most delighted by his high tone of morals. Étienne, prompted by the wily notary, had pledged his word that he had no natural children, no tie that could endanger the happiness of her dear Félicie.

“You may perhaps think I go rather too far,” said the bigot to the journalist ; “but in giving such a jewel as my Félicie to any man, one must think of the future. I am not one of those mothers who want to be rid of their daughters. Monsieur Cardot hurries matters on, urges forward his daughter’s marriage ; he wishes it over. This is the only point on which we differ. Though with a man like you, monsieur, a literary man whose youth has been preserved by hard work from the moral shipwreck now so prevalent, we may feel quite safe ; still, you would be the first to laugh at me if I looked for a husband for my daughter with my eyes shut. I know you are not an innocent, and I should be very sorry for my Félicie if you were” (this was said in a whisper) ; “but if you had any *liaison*—— For instance, monsieur, you have heard of Madame Roguin, the wife of a notary who, unhappily for our faculty, was sadly notorious. Madame Roquin has, ever since 1820, been kept by a banker——”

"Yes, du Tillet," replied Étienne; but he bit his tongue as he recollected how rash it was to confess to an acquaintance with du Tillet.

"Yes. Well, monsieur, if you were a mother, would you not quake at the thought that Madame du Tillet's fate might be your child's? At her age, and *née* de Grandville! To have as a rival a woman of fifty and more. Sooner would I see my daughter dead than give her to a man who had such a connection with a married woman. A grisette, an actress, you take her and leave her. There is no danger, in my opinion, from women of that stamp; love is their trade, they care for no one, one down and another to come on! But a woman who has sinned against duty must hug her sin; her only excuse is constancy, if such a crime can ever have an excuse. At least, that is the view I hold of a respectable woman's fall, and that is what makes it so terrible——"

Instead of looking for the meaning of these speeches, Étienne made a jest of them at Malaga's,* whither he went with his father-in-law-elect; for the notary and the journalist were the best of friends.

Lousteau had already given himself the airs of a person of importance; his life at last was to have a purpose; he was in luck's way, and in a few days would be the owner of a delightful little house in the Rue Saint-Lazare; he was going to be married to a charming woman, he would have about twenty thousand francs a year, and could give the reins to his ambition; the young lady loved him, and he would be connected with several respectable families. In short, he was in full sail on the blue waters of hope.

Madame Cardot had expressed a wish to see the cuts for "Gil Blas," one of the illustrated volumes which the French publishers were at that time bringing out, and Lousteau had taken the first numbers for the lady's inspection. The lawyer's

* See "The Imaginary Mistress."

wife had a scheme of her own, she had borrowed the book merely to return it; she wanted an excuse for walking in on her future son-in-law quite unexpectedly. The sight of those bachelor rooms, which her husband had described as charming, would tell her more, she thought, as to Lousteau's habits of life than any information she could pick up. Her sister-in-law, Madame Camusot, who knew nothing of the fateful secret, was terrified at such a marriage for her niece. Monsieur Camusot, a councilor of the supreme court, old Camusot's son by his first marriage, had given his stepmother, who was Cardot's sister, a far from flattering account of the journalist.

Lousteau, clever as he was, did not think it strange that the wife of a rich notary should wish to inspect a volume costing only fifteen francs before deciding on the purchase. Your clever man never condescends to study the middle-class, which escapes his ken by this want of attention; and while he is making game of them, they are at leisure to throttle him.

So one day early in January, 1837, Madame Cardot and her daughter took a hackney-coach and went to the Rue des Martyrs to return the parts of "Gil Blas" to Félicie's betrothed, both delighted at the thought of seeing Lousteau's rooms. These domiciliary visitations are not unusual in the old citizen class. The porter at the front gate was not in; but his daughter, on being informed by the worthy lady that she was in the presence of Monsieur Lousteau's future mother-in-law and bride, handed over the key of the apartments—all the more readily because Madame Cardot placed a gold-piece in her hand.

It was by this time about noon, the hour at which the journalist would return from breakfasting at the Café Anglais. As he crossed the open space between the church of Notre-Dame de Lorette and the Rue des Martyrs, Lousteau happened to look at a hired coach that was toiling up the Rue de Faubourg-Montmartre, and he fancied it was a dream when he saw the

face of Dinah ! He stood frozen to the spot when, on reaching his house, he beheld his Didine at the coach door.

“What has brought you here ?” he inquired. He adopted the familiar *tu* (thou). The formality of *vous* (you) was out of the question to a woman he must get rid of.

“Why, my love,” cried she, “have you not read my letters ?”

“Certainly I have,” said Lousteau.

“Well, then ?”

“Well, then ?”

“You are a father,” replied the country lady.

“Faugh !” cried he, disregarding the barbarity of such an exclamation. “Well,” thought he to himself, “she must be prepared for the blow.”

He signed to the coachman to wait, gave his hand to Madame de La Baudraye, and left the man with the chaise full of trunks, vowing that he would promptly send away, as he said to himself, the woman and her luggage, back to the place whence she had come.

“Monsieur, monsieur,” called out little Pamela.

The child had some sense, and felt that three women must not be allowed to meet in a bachelor's rooms.

“Well, well !” said Lousteau, dragging Dinah along.

Pamela concluded that the lady must be some relation ; however, she added—

“The key is in the door ; your mother-in-law is there.”

In his agitation, while Madame de La Baudraye was pouring out a flood of words, Étienne understood the child to say, “Mother is there,” the only circumstance that suggested itself as possible, and he went in.

Félicie and her mother, who were by this time in the bedroom, crept into a corner on seeing Étienne enter with a woman.

“At last, Étienne, my dearest, I am yours for life !” cried Dinah, throwing her arms round his neck, and clasping him

closely, while he took the key from the outside of the door. "Life was a perpetual anguish to me in that house at Anzy. I could bear it no longer; and when the time came for me to proclaim my happiness—well, I had not the courage. Here I am, your wife with your child! And you have not written me; you have left me two months without a line."

"But, Dinah, you place me in the greatest difficulty——"

"Do you love me?"

"How can I do otherwise than love you? But would you not have been wiser to remain at Sancerre? I am in the most abject poverty, and I fear to drag you into it——"

"Your misery will be paradise to me. I only ask to live here, never to go out——"

"Good God! that is all very fine in words, but——" Dinah sat down and melted into tears as she heard this speech, roughly spoken.

Lousteau could not resist this distress. He clasped the baroness in his arms and kissed her.

"Do not cry, Didine!" said he; and, as he uttered the words, he saw in the mirror the figure of Madame Cardot, looking at him from the farther end of the rooms. "Come, Didine, go with Pamela and get your trunks unloaded," said he in her ear. "Go; do not cry; we will be happy!"

He led her to the door, and then came back to divert the storm.

"Monsieur," said Madame Cardot, "I congratulate myself on having resolved to see for myself the home of the man who was to have been my son-in-law. If my daughter were to die of it, she should never be the wife of such a man as you. You must devote yourself to making your Didine happy, monsieur."

And the virtuous lady walked out, followed by Félicie, who was crying too, for she had become accustomed to Étienne. The dreadful Madame Cardot got into her hackney-coach again, staring insolently at the hapless Dinah, in whose heart

the sting still rankled of "that is all very fine in words ;" but who, nevertheless, like every woman in love, believed in the murmured: "Do not cry, Didine !"

Lousteau, who was not lacking in the sort of decision which grows out of the vicissitudes of a storm-tossed life, reflected thus:

"Didine is high-minded ; when once she knows of my proposed marriage, she will sacrifice herself for my future prospects, and I know how I can manage to let her know." Delighted at having hit on a trick of which the success seemed certain, he danced round to a familiar tune—

"*Larifla, fla, fla !* And Didine once out of the way," he went on, talking to himself, "I will treat Mammy Cardot to a call and a novelette: I have seduced her Félicie at Saint-Eustache—Félicie, guilty through passion, bears in her bosom the pledge of our affection—and *larifla, fla, fla !* The father cannot give me the lie, *fla, fla*—no, nor the girl—*larifla ! Ergo*: the notary, his wife, and his daughter are caught, nabbed——"

And, to her great amazement, Dinah discovered Étienne performing a prohibited dance.

"Your arrival and our happiness have turned my head with joy," said he, to explain this crazy mood.

"And I had fancied you had ceased to love me !" exclaimed the poor woman, dropping the handbag she was carrying and weeping with joy as she sank into a chair.

"Make yourself at home, my darling," said Étienne, laughing in his sleeve ; "I must write two lines to excuse myself from a bachelor party, for I mean to devote myself to you. Give your orders ; you are at home."

Étienne wrote to Bixiou :

"MY DEAR BOY:—My baroness has dropped into my arms, and will be fatal to my marriage unless we perform one of the most familiar stratagems of the thousand and one comedies at

the Gymnase. I rely on you to come here, like one of Molière's old men, to scold your nephew Léandre for his folly, while the Tenth Muse lies hidden in my bedroom; you must work on her feelings; strike hard, be brutal, offensive. I, you understand, shall express my blind devotion, and shall seem to be deaf, so that you may have to shout at me.

"Come, if you can, at seven o'clock.

"Yours,

"É. LOUSTEAU."

Having sent this letter by a commissionaire to the man who, in all Paris, most delighted in such practical jokes—in the slang of artists, a "charge"—Lousteau made a great show of settling the Muse of Sancerre in his apartments. He busied himself in arranging the baggage she had brought, and informed her as to the persons and ways of the house with such perfect good faith, and a glee which overflowed in kind words and caresses, that Dinah believed herself the best-beloved woman in the world. These rooms, where everything bore the stamp of fashion, pleased her far better than her old manor-house.

Pamela Migeon, the intelligent damsel of fourteen, was questioned by the journalist as to whether she would like to be waiting-maid to the imposing baroness. Pamela, perfectly enchanted, entered on her duties at once, by going off to order dinner from a restaurant on the boulevard. Dinah was able to judge of the extreme poverty that lay hidden under the purely superficial elegance of this bachelor home when she found none of the necessities of life. As she took possession of the closets and drawers, she indulged in the fondest dreams; she would alter Étienne's habits, she would make him home-keeping, she would fill his cup of domestic happiness.

The novelty of the position hid its disastrous side; Dinah regarded reciprocated love as the absolution of her sin; she did not yet look beyond the walls of these rooms. Pamela,

whose wits were as sharp as those of a *lorette*, went straight to Madame Schontz to beg the loan of some plate, telling her what had happened to Lousteau. After making the child welcome to all she had, Madame Schontz went off to her friend Malaga, that Cardot might be warned of the catastrophe that had befallen his future son-in-law.

The journalist, not in the least uneasy about the crisis as affecting his marriage, was more and more charming to the lady from the provinces. The dinner was the occasion of the delightful child's-play of lovers set at liberty, and happy to be free. When they had had their coffee, and Lousteau was sitting in front of the fire, Dinah on his knee, Pamela, ran in with a scared face.

"Here is Monsieur Bixiou!" said she.

"Go into the bedroom," said the journalist to his mistress; "I will soon get rid of him. He is one of my most intimate friends, and I shall have to explain to him my new start in life."

"Oh, ho! dinner for two, and a blue velvet bonnet!" cried Bixiou. "I am off. Ah! that is what comes of marrying—one must go through some partings. How rich one feels when one begins to move one's sticks, eh?"

"Who talks of marrying?" said Lousteau.

"What! are you not going to be married, then?" cried Bixiou.

"No!"

"No? My word, what next? Are you making a fool of yourself, if you please? What! You, who, by the mercy of heaven, have come across twenty thousand francs a year, and a house, and a wife connected with all the first families of the better middle-class—a wife, in short, out of the Rue des Lombards——"

"That will do, Bixiou, enough; it is at an end. Be off!"

"Be off? I have a friend's privileges, and I shall take every advantage of them. What has come over you?"

“What has ‘come over’ me is my lady from Sancerre. She is a mother, and we are going to live together happily to the end of our days. You will have heard it to-morrow, so you may as well be told it now.”

“Many chimney-pots are falling on my head, as Arnal says. But if this woman really loves you, my dear fellow, she will go back to the place she came from. Did any provincial woman ever yet find her sea-legs in Paris? She will wound all your vanities. Have you forgotten what a provincial is? She will bore you as much when she is happy as when she is sad; she will have as great a talent for escaping grace as a Parisian has in inventing it.

“Lousteau, listen to me. That a passion should lead you to forget to some extent the times in which we live is conceivable; but I, my dear fellow, have not the mythological bandage over my eyes. Well, then, consider your position. For fifteen years you have been tossing in the literary world; you are no longer young, you have padded the hoof till your soles are worn through! Yes, my boy, you turn your socks under like a street urchin to hide the holes, so that the legs cover the heels! In short, the joke is too stale. Your excuses are more familiar, more generally known, than a patent medicine——”

“I may say to you, like the regent to Cardinal Dubois: ‘That is kicking enough!’” said Lousteau, laughing.

“Oh, venerable young man,” replied Bixiou, “the iron has touched the sore to the quick. You are worn out, aren’t you? Well, then; in the heyday of youth, under the pressure of penury, what have you done? You are not in the front rank, and you have not a thousand francs of your own. That is the sum-total of the situation. Can you, in the decline of your powers, support a family by your pen, when your wife, if she is an honest woman, will not have at her command the resources of the woman of the streets, who can extract her thousand-franc note from the depths where milord keeps it

safe? You are rushing into the lowest depths of the social theatre.

“And this is only the financial side. Now, consider the political position. We are struggling in an essentially bourgeois age, in which honor, virtue, high-mindedness, talent, learning—genius, in short—is summed up in paying your way, owing nobody anything, and conducting your affairs with judgment. Be steady, be respectable, have a wife and children, pay your rent and taxes, serve in the National Guard, and be on the same pattern as all the men of your company—then you may indulge in the loftiest pretensions, rise to the Ministry! And you have the best chances possible, since you are no Montmorency. You were preparing to fulfill all the conditions insisted on for turning out a political personage, you are capable of every mean trick that is necessary in office, even of pretending to be commonplace—you would have acted it to the life. And just for a woman, who will leave you in the lurch—the end of every eternal passion—in three, five, or seven years—after exhausting your last physical and intellectual powers, you turn your back on the sacred hearth, on the Rue des Lombards, on a political career, on thirty thousand francs per annum, on respectability and respect. Ought that to be the end of a man who has done with illusions?

“If you had kept a pot-boiling for some actress who gave you your fun for it—well; that is what you may call a cabinet matter. But to live with another man’s wife? It is a draft at sight on disaster; it is bolting the bitter pills of vice with none of the gilding.”

“That will do. One word answers it all; I love Madame de La Baudraye, and prefer her to every fortune, to every position the world can offer. I may have been carried away by a gust of ambition, but everything must give way to the joy of being a father.”

“Ah, ha! you have a fancy for paternity? But, wretched

man, we are the fathers only of our legitimate children. What is a brat that does not bear your name? The last chapter of the romance. Your child will be taken from you! We have seen that story in twenty plays these ten years past.

"Society, my dear boy, will drop upon you sooner or later. Read 'Adolphe' once more. Dear me! I fancy I can see you when you and she are used to each other;—I see you dejected, hang-dog, bereft of position and fortune, and fighting like the shareholders of a bogus company when they are tricked by a director.

"Your director is happiness."

"Say no more, Bixiou."

"But I have only just begun," said Bixiou. "Listen, my dear boy. Marriage has been out of favor for some time past; but, apart from the advantages it offers in being the only recognized way of certifying heredity, as it affords a good-looking young man, though penniless, the opportunity of making his fortune in two months, it survives in spite of disadvantages. And there is not the man living who would not repent, sooner or later, of having, by his own fault, lost the chance of marrying thirty thousand francs a year."

"You won't understand me," cried Lousteau, in a voice of exasperation. "Go away—she is there——"

"I beg your pardon; why did you not tell me sooner? You are of age, and so is she," he added in a lower voice, but loud enough to be heard by Dinah. "She will make you repent bitterly of your happiness!——"

"If it is a folly, I intend to commit it. Farewell."

"A man gone overboard!" cried Bixiou.

"Devil take those friends who think they have a right to preach to you," said Lousteau, opening the door of the bedroom, where he found Madame de La Baudraye sunk in an armchair and dabbing her eyes with an embroidered handkerchief.

"Oh, why did I come here?" sobbed she. "Good

heavens, why indeed? Étienne, I am not so provincial as you think me. You are making a fool of me."

"Darling angel," replied Lousteau, taking Dinah in his arms, lifting her from her chair, and dragging her half-dead into the drawing-room, "we have both pledged our future, it is sacrifice for sacrifice. While I was loving you at Sancerre, they were engaging me to be married here, but I refused. Oh! I was extremely distressed——"

"I am going," cried Dinah, starting wildly to her feet and turning to the door.

"You will stay here, my Didine. All is at an end. And is this fortune so lightly earned after all? Must I not marry a gawky, tow-haired creature, with a red nose, the daughter of a notary, and saddle myself with a stepmother who could easily give Madame de Piédefer points on the score of bigotry beside the——"

Pamela flew in, and whispered in Lousteau's ear—

"Madame Schontz!"

Lousteau rose, leaving Dinah on the sofa, and went out.

"It is all over with you, my dear," said the woman. "Cardot does not mean to quarrel with his wife for the sake of a son-in-law. The lady made a scene—something like a scene, I can tell you! So, to conclude, the head-clerk, who was the late head-clerk's deputy for two years, agrees to take the girl with the business."

"Mean wretch!" exclaimed Lousteau. "What! in two hours he has made up his mind?"

"Bless me, that is simple enough. The rascal, who knew all the dead man's little secrets, guessed what a fix his master was in from overhearing a few words of the squabble with Madame Cardot. The notary relies on your honor and good feeling, for the affair is settled. The clerk, whose conduct has been admirable, went so far as to attend mass! A finished hypocrite, I say—just suits the mamma. You and Cardot will still be friends. He is to be a director in an immense

financial concern, and he may be of use to you. So you have been waked from a sweet dream."

"I have lost a fortune, a wife, and——"

"And a mistress," said Madame Schontz, smiling. "Here you are, more than married; you will be insufferable, you will be always wanting to get home, there will be nothing loose about you, neither your clothes nor your habits. And, after all, my Arthur does things in style. I will be faithful to him and cut Malaga's acquaintance.

"Let me peep at her through the door—your Sancerre Muse," she went on. "Is there no finer bird than that to be found in the desert?" she exclaimed. "You are cheated! She is dignified, lean, lachrymose; she only needs Lady Dudley's turban!"

"What is it now?" asked Madame de La Baudraye, who had heard the rustle of a silk dress and the murmur of a woman's voice.

"It is, my darling, that we are now indissolubly united. I have just had an answer to the letter you saw me write, which was to break off my marriage——"

"So that was the party which you gave up?"

"Yes."

"Oh, I will be more than your wife—I am your slave, I give you my life," said the poor deluded creature. "I did not believe I could love you more than I did! Now I shall not be a mere incident, but your whole life?"

"Yes, my beautiful, my generous Didine."

"Swear to me," said she, "that only death shall divide us."

Lousteau was ready to sweeten his vows with the most fascinating prettinesses. And this was why: Between the door of the apartment where he had taken the lorette's farewell kiss and that of the drawing-room, where the Muse was reclining, bewildered by such a succession of shocks, Lousteau had remembered little de La Baudraye's precarious health, his

fine fortune, and Bianchon's remark about Dinah: "She will be a rich widow!" and he said to himself, "I would a hundred times rather have Madame de La Baudraye for a wife than Félicie!"

His plan of action was quickly decided on; he determined to play the farce of passion once more, and to perfection.

His mean self-interest and his false vehemence of passion had disastrous results. Madame de La Baudraye, when she set out from Sancerre for Paris, had intended to live in rooms of her own quite near to Lousteau; but the proofs of devotion her lover had shown her by giving up such brilliant prospects, and yet more the perfect happiness of the first days of their illicit union, kept her from mentioning such a parting. The second day was to be—and indeed was—a high festival, in which such a suggestion proposed to "her angel" would have been a discordant note.

Lousteau, on his part, anxious to make Dinah feel herself dependent on him, kept her in a state of constant intoxication by incessant amusement. These circumstances hindered two persons so clever as these were from avoiding the slough into which they fell—that of a life in common, a piece of folly of which, unfortunately, many instances may be seen in Paris in literary circles.

And thus was the whole programme played out of a provincial amour, so satirically described by Lousteau to Madame de La Baudraye—a fact which neither he nor she remembered. Passion is born a deaf-mute.

This winter in Paris was to Madame de La Baudraye all that the month of October had been at Sancerre. Étienne, to initiate "his wife" into Paris life, varied this honeymoon by evenings at the play, where Dinah would only go to the stage box. At first Madame de La Baudraye preserved some remnants of her countrified modesty; she was afraid of being seen; she hid her happiness. She would say—

"Monsieur de Clagny or Monsieur Gravier may have followed me to Paris." She was afraid of Sancerre even in Paris.

Lousteau, who was excessively vain, educated Dinah, took her to the best dressmakers, and pointed out to her the most fashionable women, advising her to take them as models for imitation. And Madame de La Baudraye's provincial appearance was soon a thing of the past. Lousteau, when his friends met him, was congratulated on his conquest.

All through that season Étienne wrote little and got very much into debt, though Dinah, who was proud, bought all her clothes out of her savings, and fancied she had not been the smallest expense to her beloved. By the end of three months Dinah was acclimatized: she had reveled in the music at the Italian opera; she knew the pieces "on" at all theatres, and the actors and jests of the day; she had become inured to this life of perpetual excitement, this rapid torrent in which everything is forgotten. She no longer craned her neck or stood with her nose in the air, like an image of Amazement, at the constant surprises that Paris has for a stranger. She had learned to breathe that witty, vitalizing, teeming atmosphere where clever people feel themselves in their element, and which they can no longer bear to quit.

One morning, as she read the papers, for Lousteau had them all, two lines carried her back to Sancerre and the past, two lines that seemed not unfamiliar—as follows—

"Monsieur le Baron de Clagny, Public Prosecutor to the Criminal Court at Sancerre, has been appointed Deputy Public Prosecutor to the Supreme Court in Paris."

"How well that worthy lawyer loves you!" said the journalist, smiling.

"Poor man!" said she. "What did I tell you? He is following me."

Étienne and Dinah were just then at the most dazzling and fervid stage of a passion when each is perfectly accustomed to

the other, and yet love has not lost its freshness and relish. The lovers know each other well, but all is not yet understood; they have not been a second time to the same secret haunts of the soul; they have not studied each other till they know, as they must later, the very thought, word, and gesture that responds to every event, the greatest and the smallest. Enchantment reigns; there are no collisions, no differences of opinion, no cold looks. Their two souls are always on the same side. And Dinah would speak the magical words, emphasized by the yet more magical expression and looks which every woman can use under such circumstances.

"When you cease to love me, kill me. If you should cease to love me, I believe I could kill you first and myself after."

To this sweet exaggeration, Lousteau would reply—

"All I ask of God is to see you as constant as I shall be. It is you who will desert me!"

"My love is supreme."

"Supreme," echoed Lousteau. "Come, now? Suppose I am dragged away to a bachelor party, and find there one of my former mistresses, and she makes fun of me; I, out of vanity, behave as if I were free, and do not come in here till next morning—would you still love me?"

"A woman is only sure of being loved when she is preferred; and if you came back to me, if—— Oh! you make me understand what the happiness would be of forgiving the man I adore."

"Well, then, I am truly loved for the first time in my life!" cried Lousteau.

"At last you understand that!" said she.

Lousteau proposed that they should each write a letter setting forth the reasons which would compel them to end by suicide. Once in possession of such a document, each might kill the other without danger in case of infidelity. But in spite of mutual promises, neither wrote the letter.

The journalist, happy for the moment, promised himself

that he would deceive Dinah when he should be tired of her, and would sacrifice everything to the requirements of that deception. To him Madame de La Baudraye was a fortune in herself. At the same time, he felt the yoke.

Dinah, by consenting to this union, showed a generous mind and the power derived from self-respect. In this absolute intimacy, in which both lovers put off their mask, the young woman never abdicated her modesty, her masculine rectitude, and the strength peculiar to ambitious souls, which formed the basis of her character. Lousteau involuntarily held her in high esteem. As a Parisian, Dinah was superior to the most fascinating courtesan; she could be as amusing and as witty as Malaga; but her extensive information, her habits of mind, her vast reading enabled her to generalize her wit, while the Florines and the Schontzes exerted theirs over a very narrow circle.

"There is in Dinah," said Étienne to Bixiou, "the stuff to make both a Ninon and a de Staël."

"A woman who combines an encyclopædia and a seraglio is very dangerous," replied the mocking spirit.

When the expected infant became a visible fact, Madame de La Baudraye would be seen no more; but before shutting herself up, never to go out unless into the country, she was bent on being present at the first performance of a play by Nathan. This literary solemnity occupied the minds of the two thousand persons who regard themselves as constituting "all Paris." Dinah, who had never been at a first-night's performance, was full of very natural curiosity. She had by this time arrived at such a pitch of affection for Lousteau that she gloried in her misconduct; she exerted a sort of savage strength to defy the world; she was determined to look it in the face without turning her head aside.

She dressed herself to perfection, in a style suited to her delicate looks and the sickly whiteness of her face. Her pallid complexion gave her an expression of refinement, and

her black hair in smooth bands enhanced her pallor. Her brilliant gray eyes looked finer than ever, set in dark rings. But a terribly distressing incident awaited her. By a very simple chance, the box given to the journalist, on the first tier, was next to that which Anna Grossetête had taken. The two intimate friends did not even bow; neither chose to acknowledge the other. At the end of the first act Lousteau left his seat, abandoning Dinah to the fire of eyes, the glare of opera-glasses; while the Baronne de Fontaine and the Comtesse Marie de Vandenesse, who accompanied her, received some of the most distinguished men of fashion.

Dinah's solitude was all the more distressing because she had not the art of putting a good face on the matter by examining the company through her opera-glass. In vain did she try to assume a dignified and thoughtful attitude, and fix her eyes on vacancy; she was overpoweringly conscious of being the object of general attention; she could not disguise her discomfort, and lapsed a little into provincialism, displaying her handkerchief and making involuntary movements of which she had almost cured herself. At last, between the second and third acts, a man had himself admitted to Dinah's box! It was Monsieur de Clagny.

"I am happy to see you, to tell you how much I am pleased by your promotion," said she.

"Oh! madame, for whom should I come to Paris——?"

"What!" said she. "Have I anything to do with your appointment?"

"Everything," said he. "Since you left Sancerre, it had become intolerable to me; I was dying——"

"Your sincere friendship does me good," replied she, holding out her hand. "I am in a position to make much of my true friends; I now know their value. I feared I must have lost your esteem, but the proof you have given me by this visit touches me more deeply than your ten years' attachment."

"You are an object of curiosity to the whole house," said the lawyer. "Oh! my dear, is this a part for you to be playing? Could you not be happy and yet remain honored? I have just heard that you are Monsieur Étienne Lousteau's mistress, that you live together as man and wife! You have broken for ever with society; even if you should some day marry your lover, the time will come when you will feel the want of the respectability you now despise. Ought you not to be in a home of your own with your mother, who loves you well enough to protect you with her ægis? Appearances at least would be saved."

"I am in the wrong to have come here," replied she, "that is all. I have bid farewell to all the advantages which the world confers on women who know how to reconcile happiness and the proprieties. My abnegation is so complete that I only wish I could clear a vast space about me to make a desert of my love, full of God, of *him*, and of myself. We have made too many sacrifices on both sides not to be united—united by disgrace if you will, but indissolubly one. I am happy; so happy that I can love freely, my friend, and confide in you more than of old—for I need a friend."

The lawyer was magnanimous—nay, truly great. To this declaration, in which Dinah's soul thrilled, he replied in heart-rending tones—

"I wanted to go to see you, to be sure that you were loved: I shall now be easy, and no longer alarmed as to your future. But will your lover appreciate the magnitude of your sacrifice; is there any gratitude in his affection?"

"Come to the Rue des Martyrs and you will see!" she exclaimed.

"Yes, I will call," he replied. "I have already passed your door without daring to inquire for you. You do not yet know the literary world. There are glorious exceptions, no doubt; but these men of letters drag terrible evils in their train; among these I account publicity as one of the greatest,

for it blights everything. A woman may at any time commit herself with——”

“With a public prosecutor?” the baroness put in with a smile.

“Well!—and then after a rupture there is still something to fall back on; the world has known nothing. But with a more or less famous man the public is thoroughly informed. Why, look there! What an example you have close at hand! You are sitting back to back with the Comtesse Marie Vandenesse, who was within an ace of committing the utmost folly for a more celebrated man than Lousteau—for Nathan—and now they do not even recognize each other. After going to the very edge of the precipice, the countess was saved, no one knows how; she neither left her husband nor her house; but as a famous man was concerned, she was the talk of the town for a whole winter. But for her husband’s great fortune, great name, and high position, but for the admirable management of that true statesman—whose conduct to his wife, they say, was perfect—she would have been ruined; in her position no other woman would have remained respected as she is.”

“And how was Sancerre when you came away?” asked Madame de La Baudraye, to change the subject.

“Monsieur de La Baudraye announced that your expected confinement after so many years made it necessary that it should take place in Paris, and that he had insisted on your going to be attended by the first physicians,” replied Monsieur de Clagny, guessing what it was that Dinah most wanted to know. “And so, in spite of the commotion to which your departure gave rise, you still have your legal status,” added the public prosecutor.

“Why!” she exclaimed, “can Monsieur de La Baudraye still hope——”

“Your husband, madame, did what he always does—made a little calculation.”

The lawyer left the box when the journalist returned, bowing with dignity.

"You are a greater hit than the piece," said Étienne to Dinah.

This brief triumph brought greater happiness to the poor woman than she had ever known in the whole of her provincial existence ; still, as they left the theatre she was very grave.

"What ails you, my Didine?" asked Lousteau.

"I am wondering how a woman succeeds in conquering the world?"

"There are two ways. One is by being Madame de Staël, the other is by having two hundred thousand francs a year."

"Society," said she, "asserts its hold on us by appealing to our vanity, our love of appearances. Pooh! We will be philosophers!"

That evening was the last gleam of the delusive well-being in which Madame de La Baudraye had lived since coming to Paris. Three days later she observed a cloud on Lousteau's brow as he walked round the little garden-plot, smoking a cigar. This woman, who acquired from her husband the habit and the pleasure of never owing anybody a sou, was informed that the household was penniless, with two quarters' rent owing, and on the eve, in fact, of an execution.

This reality of Paris life pierced Dinah's heart like a thorn ; she repented of have tempted Étienne into the extravagances of love. It is so difficult to pass from pleasure to work, that happiness has wrecked more poems than sorrows ever helped to flow in sparkling jests. Dinah, happy in seeing Étienne taking his ease, smoking a cigar after breakfast, his face beaming as he basked like a lizard in the sunshine, could not summon up courage enough to make herself the bum-bailiff* of a magazine.

It struck her that through the worthy Migeon, Pamela's

* A rent-distraining constable.

father, she might pawn the few jewels she possessed, on which her "uncle," for she was learning to talk the slang of the town, advanced her nine hundred francs. She kept three hundred for her baby-clothes and the expenses of her illness, and joyfully presented the sum due to Lousteau, who was ploughing, furrow by furrow, or, if you will, line by line, through a novel for a periodical.

"Dearest heart," said she, "finish your novel without making any sacrifice to necessity; polish the style, work up the subject. I have played the fine lady too long; I am going to be the housewife and attend to business."

For the last four months Étienne had been taking Dinah to the Café Riche to dine every day, a corner being always kept for them. The country-woman was in dismay at being told that five hundred francs were owing for the last fortnight.

"What! we have been drinking wine at six francs a bottle! A Norman sole costs five francs!—and twenty centimes for a roll?" she exclaimed, as she looked through the bill Lousteau showed her.

"Well, it makes very little difference to us whether we are robbed at a restaurant or by a cook," said Lousteau.

"Henceforth, for the cost of your dinner, you shall live like a prince."

Having induced the landlord to let her have a kitchen and two servant's rooms, Madame de La Baudraye wrote a few lines to her mother, begging her to send her some linen and a loan of a thousand francs. She received two trunks full of linen, some plate, and two thousand francs, sent by the hand of an honest and pious cook recommended her by her mother.

Ten days after the evening at the theatre when they had met, Monsieur de Clagny came to call at four o'clock, after coming out of court, and found Madame de La Baudraye making a little cap. The sight of this proud and ambitious woman, whose mind was so accomplished, and who had queened it so well at the Castle of Anzy, now condescending

to household cares and sewing for the coming infant, moved the poor lawyer, who had just left the bench. And as he saw the pricks on one of the taper fingers he had so often kissed, he understood that Madame de La Baudraye was not merely playing at this maternal task.

In the course of this first interview the magistrate saw to the depths of Dinah's soul. This perspicacity in a man so much in love was a superhuman effort. He saw that Didine meant to be the journalist's guardian spirit and lead him into a nobler road; she had seen that the difficulties of his practical life were due to some moral defects. Between two beings united by love—in one so genuine, and in the other so well feigned—more than one confidence had been exchanged in the course of four months. Notwithstanding the care with which Étienne wrapped up his true self, a word now and then had not failed to enlighten Dinah as to the previous life of a man whose talents were so hampered by poverty, so perverted by bad examples, so thwarted by obstacles beyond his courage to surmount. "He will be a greater man if life is easy to him," said she to herself. And she strove to make him happy, to give him the sense of a sheltered home by dint of such economy and method as are familiar to provincial folk.

Thus Dinah became a housekeeper, as she had become a poet, by the soaring of her soul toward the heights.

"His happiness will be my absolution."

These words, wrung from Madame de La Baudraye by her friend, the lawyer, accounted for the existing state of things. The publicity of his triumph, flaunted by Étienne on the evening of the first performance, had very plainly shown the lawyer what Lousteau's purpose was. To Étienne, Madame de La Baudraye was, to use his own phrase, "a fine feather in his cap." Far from preferring the joys of a shy and mysterious passion, of hiding such exquisite happiness from the eyes of the world, he found vulgar satisfaction in displaying

the first woman of respectability who had ever honored him with her affection.

The judge, however, was for some time deceived by the attentions which any man would lavish on any woman in *Madame de La Baudraye's* situation, and *Lousteau* made them doubly charming by the ingratiating ways characteristic of men whose manners are naturally attractive. There are, in fact, men who have something of the monkey in them by nature, and to whom the assumption of the most engaging forms of sentiment is so easy that the actor is not detected; and *Lousteau's* natural gifts had been fully developed on the stage on which he had hitherto figured.

Between the months of April and July, when *Dinah* expected her confinement, she discovered why it was that *Lousteau* had not triumphed over poverty; he was idle and had no power of will. The brain, to be sure, must obey its own laws; it recognizes neither the exigencies of life nor the voice of honor; a man cannot write a great book because a woman is dying, or to pay a discreditable debt, or to bring up a family; at the same time, there is no great talent without a strong will. These twin forces are requisite for the erection of the vast edifice of personal glory. A distinguished genius keeps his brain in a productive condition, just as the knights of old kept their weapons always ready for battle. They conquer indolence, they deny themselves enervating pleasures, or indulge only to a fixed limit proportioned to their powers. This explains the life of such men as *Walter Scott*, *Cuvier*, *Voltaire*, *Newton*, *Buffon*, *Bayle*, *Bossuet*, *Leibnitz*, *Lopez de Vega*, *Calderon*, *Boccaccio*, *Aretino*, *Aristotle*—in short, every man who delighted, governed, or led his contemporaries.

A man may and ought to pride himself more on his will than on his talent. Though Talent has its germ in a cultivated gift, Will means the incessant conquest of his instincts, of proclivities subdued and mortified, and difficulties of every kind heroically defeated. The abuse of smoking encouraged *Lous-*

teau's indolence. Tobacco, which can lull grief, inevitably numbs a man's energy.

Then, while the cigar deteriorated him physically, criticism as a profession morally stultified a man so easily tempted by pleasure. Criticism is as fatal to the critic as seeing two sides of a question is to a pleader. In these professions the judgment is undermined, the mind loses its lucid rectitude. The writer lives by taking sides. Thus, we may distinguish two kinds of criticism, as in painting we may distinguish art from practical dexterity. Criticism, after the pattern of most contemporary leader-writers, is the expression of judgments formed at random in a more or less witty way, just as an advocate pleads in court on the most contradictory briefs. The newspaper critic always finds a subject to work up in the book he is discussing. Done after this fashion, the business is well adapted to indolent brains, to men devoid of the sublime faculty of imagination, or, possessed of it indeed, but lacking courage to cultivate it. Every play, every book, comes to their pen as a subject, making no demand on their imaginations, and of which they simply write a report, seriously or in irony, according to the mood of the moment. As to an opinion, whatever it may be, French wit can always justify it, being admirably ready to defend either side of any case. And conscience counts for so little, these bravos have so little value for their own words, that they will loudly praise in the green-room the work they tear to tatters in print.

Nay, men have been known to transfer their services from one paper to another without being at the pains to consider that the opinions of a new sheet must be diametrically antagonistic to those of the old. Madame de La Baudraye could smile to see Lousteau with one article on the Legitimist side and one on the side of the new dynasty, both on the same occasion. She admired the maxim he preached—

“We are the attorneys of public opinion.”

The other kind of criticism is a science. It necessitates a

thorough comprehension of each work, a lucid insight into the tendencies of the age, the adoption of a system, and faith in fixed principles—that is to say, a scheme of jurisprudence, a summing-up, and a verdict. The critic is then a magistrate of ideas, the censor of his time ; he fulfills a sacred function ; while in the former case he is but an acrobat who turns somersaults for a living as long as he has a leg to stand on. Between Claud Vignon and Lousteau lay the gulf that divides mere dexterity from art.

Dinah, whose mind was soon freed from rust, and whose intellect was by no means narrow, had ere long taken literary measure of her idol. She saw Lousteau working up to the last minute under the most discreditable compulsion, and scamping his work, as painters say of a picture from which sound technique is absent ; but she would excuse him by saying : “ He is a poet ! ” so anxious was she to justify him in her own eyes. When she thus guessed the secret of many a writer’s existence, she also guessed that Lousteau’s pen could never be trusted to as a resource.

Then her love for him led her to take a step she would never have thought of for her own sake. Through her mother she tried to negotiate with her husband for an allowance, but without Étienne’s knowledge ; for, as she thought, it would be an offense to his delicate feelings, which must be considered. A few days before the end of July, Dinah crumpled up in her wrath the letter from her mother containing Monsieur de La Baudraye’s ultimatum—

“ Madame de La Baudraye cannot need an allowance in Paris when she can live in perfect luxury at her Castle of Anzy : she may return.”

Lousteau picked up this letter and read it.

“ I will avenge you ! ” said he to Dinah in the ominous tone that delights a woman when her antipathies are flattered.

Five days after this, Bianchon and Duriau, the famous ladies’ doctor, were engaged at Lousteau’s ; for he, ever since

little La Baudraye's reply, had been making a great display of his joy and importance over the advent of the infant. Monsieur de Clagny and Madame Piédefer—sent for in all haste—were to be the godparents, for the cautious magistrate feared lest Lousteau should commit some compromising blunder. Madame de La Baudraye gave birth to a boy that might have filled a queen with envy who hoped for an heir-presumptive.

Bianchon and Monsieur de Clagny went off to register the child at the mayor's office as the son of Monsieur and Madame de La Baudraye, unknown to Étienne, who, on his part, rushed off to a printer's to have this circular set up:

“Madame la Baronne de La Baudraye is happily delivered of a son.

“Monsieur Étienne Lousteau has the pleasure of informing you of the fact.

“The mother and child are doing well.”

Lousteau had already sent out sixty of these announcements when Monsieur de Clagny, on coming to make inquiries, happened to see the list of the persons at Sancerre to whom Lousteau proposed to send this amazing notice, written below the names of the persons in Paris to whom it was already gone. The lawyer confiscated the list and the remainder of the circulars, showed them to Madame Piédefer, begging her on no account to allow Lousteau to carry on this atrocious jest, and jumped into a cab. The devoted friend then ordered from the same printer another announcement in the following words:

“Madame la Baronne de La Baudraye is happily delivered of a son.

“Monsieur le Baron de La Baudraye has the honor of informing you of the fact.

“Mother and child are doing well.”

After seeing the proofs destroyed, the form of type, everything that could bear witness to the existence of the former document, Monsieur de Clagny set to work to intercept those that had been sent ; in many cases he changed them at the porter's lodge, he got thirty back into his own hands, and at last, after three days of hard work, only one of the original notes existed, that, namely, sent to Nathan.

Five times had the lawyer called on the great man without finding him. By the time Monsieur de Clagny was admitted, after requesting an interview, the story of the announcement was known to all Paris. Some persons regarded it as one of those waggish calumnies, a sort of stab to which every reputation, even the most ephemeral, is exposed ; others said they had read the paper and returned it to some friend of the La Baudraye family ; a great many declaimed against the immorality of journalists ; in short, this last remaining specimen was regarded as a curiosity. Florine, with whom Nathan was living, had shown it about, stamped in the postoffice as paid, and addressed in Étienne's hand. So, as soon as the judge spoke of the announcement, Nathan began to smile.

"Give up that monument of recklessness and folly?" cried he. "That autograph is one of those weapons which an athlete in the circus cannot afford to lay down. That note proves that Lousteau has no heart, no taste, no dignity ; that he knows nothing of the world nor of public morality ; that he insults himself when he can find no one else to insult. None but the son of a provincial citizen imported from Sancerre to become a poet, but who is only the bravo of some contemptible magazine, could ever have sent out such a circular letter, as you must allow, monsieur. This is a document indispensable to the archives of the age. To-day Lousteau flatters me, to-morrow he may ask for my head. Excuse me, I forgot you were a judge.

"I have gone through a passion for a lady, a great lady, as far superior to Madame de La Baudraye as your fine feeling,

monsieur, is superior to Lousteau's vulgar retaliation; but I would have died rather than utter her name. A few months of her airs and graces cost me a hundred thousand francs and my prospects for life; but I do not think the price too high! And I have never murmured! If a woman betrays the secret of her passion, it is the supreme offering of her love, but a man! He must be a Lousteau!

"No, I would not give up that paper for a thousand crowns."

"Monsieur," said the lawyer at last, after an eloquent battle lasting half an hour, "I have called on fifteen or sixteen men of letters about this affair, and can it be that you are the only one immovable by an appeal of honor? It is not for Étienne Lousteau that I plead, but for a woman and child, both equally ignorant of the damage thus done to their fortune, their prospects, and their honor. Who knows, monsieur, whether you might not some day be compelled to plead for some favor of justice for a friend, for some person whose honor was dearer to you than your own. It might be remembered against you that you had been ruthless. Can such a man as you are hesitate?" added Monsieur de Clagny.

"I only wished you to understand the extent of the sacrifice," replied Nathan, giving up the letter, as he reflected on the judge's influence and accepted this implied bargain.

When the journalist's stupid jest had been counteracted, Monsieur de Clagny went to give him a rating in the presence of Madame Piédefer; but he found Lousteau fuming with irritation.

"What I did, monsieur, I did with a purpose!" replied Étienne. "Monsieur de La Baudraye has sixty thousand francs a year, and refuses to make his wife an allowance; I wished to make him feel that the child is in my power."

"Yes, monsieur, I quite suspected it," replied the lawyer. "For that reason I readily agreed to be little Polydore's godfather, and he is registered as the son of the Baron and Baronne

de La Baudraye; if you have the feelings of a father, you ought to rejoice in knowing that the child is heir to one of the finest entailed estates in France."

"And pray, sir, is the mother to die of hunger?"

"Be quite easy," said the lawyer bitterly, having dragged from Lousteau the expression of feeling he had so long been expecting. "I will undertake to transact the matter with Monsieur de La Baudraye."

Monsieur de Clagny left the house with a chill at his heart.

Dinah, his idol, was loved for her money. Would she not, when too late, have her eyes opened?

"Poor woman!" said the lawyer, as he walked away. And this justice we will do him—for to whom should justice be done unless to a judge?—he loved Dinah too sincerely to regard her degradation as a means of triumph one day; he was all pity and devotion; he really loved her.

The care and nursing of the infant, its cries, the quiet needed for the mother during the first few days, and the ubiquity of Madame Piédefer, were so entirely adverse to literary labors, that Lousteau moved up to the three rooms taken on the second floor for the old bigot. The journalist, obliged to go to first performances without Dinah, and living apart from her, found an indescribable charm in the use of his liberty. More than once he submitted to be taken by the arm and dragged off to some jollification; more than once he found himself at the house of a friend's mistress in the heart of bohemia. He again saw women brilliantly young and splendidly dressed, in whom economy seemed treason to their youth and power. Dinah, in spite of her striking beauty, after nursing her baby for three months, could not stand comparison with these perishable blossoms, so soon faded, but so showy as long as they live rooted in opulence.

Home life had, nevertheless, a strong attraction for Étienne.

In three months the mother and daughter, with the help of the cook from Sancerre and of little Pamela, had given the apartment a quite changed appearance. The journalist found his breakfast and his dinner there served with a sort of luxury. Dinah, handsome and nicely dressed, was careful to anticipate her dear Étienne's wishes, and he felt himself the king of his home, where everything, even the baby, was subject to his selfishness. Dinah's affection was to be seen in every trifle; Lousteau could not possibly cease the entrancing deceptions of his unreal passion.

Dinah, meanwhile, was aware of a source of ruin, both to her love and to the household, in the kind of life into which Lousteau had allowed himself to drift. At the end of ten months she weaned her baby, installed her mother in the upstairs rooms, and restored the family intimacy which indissolubly links a man and woman when the woman is loving and clever. One of the most striking circumstances in Benjamin Constant's novel, one of the explanations of Ellénore's desertion, is the want of daily—or, if you will, of nightly—intercourse between her and Adolphe. Each of the lovers has a separate home; they have both submitted to the world and saved appearances. Ellénore, repeatedly left to herself, is compelled to vast labors of affection to expel the thoughts of release which captivate Adolphe when absent. The constant exchange of glances and thoughts in domestic life gives a woman such power that a man needs stronger reasons for desertion than she will ever give him so long as she loves him.

This was an entirely new phase both to Étienne and to Dinah. Dinah intended to be indispensable; she wanted to infuse fresh energy into this man, whose weakness smiled upon her, for she thought it a security. She found him subjects, sketched the treatment, and at a pinch would write whole chapters. She revived the vitality of this dying talent by transfusing fresh blood into his veins; she supplied him with ideas and opinions. In short, she produced two books which

were a success. More than once she saved Lousteau's self-esteem by dictating, correcting, or finishing his articles when he was in despair at his own lack of ideas. The secret of this collaboration was strictly preserved; Madame Piédefer knew nothing of it.

This mental galvanism was rewarded by improved pay, enabling them to live comfortably till the end of 1838. Lousteau became used to seeing Dinah doing his work, and he paid her, as the French people say in their vigorous lingo, in "monkey money"—nothing for her pains. This expenditure in self-sacrifice becomes a treasure which generous souls prize, and the more she gave the more she loved Lousteau; the time soon came when Dinah felt that it would be too bitter a grief ever to give him up.

But then another child was coming, and this year was a terrible trial. In spite of the precautions of the two women, Étienne contracted debts; he worked himself to death to pay them off while Dinah was laid up; and, knowing him as she did, she thought him heroic. But after this effort, appalled at having two women, two children, and two maids on his hands, he was incapable of the struggle to maintain a family by his pen when he had failed to maintain even himself. So he let things take their chance. Then the ruthless speculator exaggerated the farce of love-making at home to secure greater liberty abroad.

Dinah proudly endured the burden of life without support. The one idea: "He loves me!" gave her superhuman strength. She worked as hard as the most energetic spirits of our time. At the risk of her beauty and health, Dinah was to Lousteau what Mademoiselle Delachaux was to Gardane, in Diderot's noble and true tale. But while sacrificing herself, she committed the magnanimous blunder of sacrificing dress. She had her gowns dyed, and wore nothing but black. She stank of black, as Malaga said, making fun mercilessly of Lousteau.

By the end of 1839, Étienne, following the example of

Louis XV., had, by dint of gradual capitulations of conscience, come to the point of establishing a distinction between his own money and the housekeeping money, just as Louis XV. drew the line between his privy purse and the public moneys. He deceived Dinah as to his earnings. On discovering this baseness, Madame de La Baudraye went through fearful tortures of jealousy. She wanted to live two lives—the life of the world and the life of a literary woman; she accompanied Lousteau to every first-night performance, and could detect in him many impulses of wounded vanity, for her black attire rubbed off, as it were, on him, clouding his brow, and sometimes leading him to be quite brutal. He was really the woman of the two; and he had all a woman's exacting perversity; he would reproach Dinah for the dowdiness of her appearance, even while benefiting by the sacrifice, which to a mistress is so cruel—exactly like a woman who, after sending a man through a gutter to save her honor, tells him she “cannot bear dirt!” when he comes out.

Dinah then found herself obliged to gather up the rather loose reins of power by which a clever woman drives a man devoid of will. But in so doing she could not fail to lose much of her moral lustre. Such suspicions as she betrayed drag a woman into quarrels which lead to disrespect, because she herself comes down from the high level on which she had at first placed herself. Next she made some concessions: Lousteau was allowed to entertain several of his friends—Nathan, Bixiou, Blondet, Finot—whose manners, language, and intercourse were depraving. They tried to convince Madame de La Baudraye that her principles and aversions were a survival of provincial prudishness; and they preached the creed of woman's superiority.

Before long her jealousy put weapons into Lousteau's hands. During the carnival of 1840, she disguised herself to go to the balls at the opera-house, and to suppers where she met courtesans, in order to keep an eye on all Étienne's amusements.

On the day of mid-lent—or, rather, at eight on the morning after—Dinah came home from the ball in her fancy dress to go to bed. She had gone to spy on Lousteau, who, believing her to be ill, had engaged himself for that evening to Fanny Beaupré. The journalist, warned by a friend, had behaved so as to deceive the poor woman, only too ready to be deceived.

As she stepped out of the hired coach, Dinah met Monsieur de La Baudraye, to whom the porter pointed her out. The little old man took his wife by the arm, saying, in an icy tone—

“So this is you, madame!”

This sudden advent of conjugal authority, before which she felt herself so small, and, above all, these words, almost froze the heart of the unhappy woman caught in the costume of a *débardeur* (firewood carrier). To escape Étienne’s eye the more effectually, she had chosen a dress he was not likely to detect her in. She took advantage of the mask she still had on to escape without replying, changed her dress, and went up to her mother’s rooms, where she found her husband waiting for her. In spite of her assumed dignity, she blushed in the old man’s presence.

“What do you want of me, monsieur?” she asked. “Are we not separated for ever?”

“Actually, yes,” said Monsieur de La Baudraye. “Legally, no.”

Madame Piédefer was telegraphing signals to her daughter, which Dinah presently observed and understood.

“Nothing could have brought you here but your own interests,” she said, in a bitter tone.

“*Our* interests,” said the little man coldly, “for we have two children. Your uncle, Silas Piédefer, is dead, at New York, where, after having made and lost several fortunes in various parts of the world, he has finally left some seven or eight hundred thousand francs—they say twelve—but there is

stock-in-trade to be sold. I am the chief in our common interests, and act for you."

"Oh!" cried Dinah, "in everything that relates to business, I trust to no one but Monsieur de Clagny. He knows the law, come to terms with him; what he does will be done right."

"I have no occasion for Monsieur Clagny," answered Monsieur de La Baudraye, "to take my children from you——"

"Your children!" exclaimed Dinah. "Your children, to whom you have not sent a sou! *Your* children!" She burst into a loud shout of laughter; but Monsieur de La Baudraye's unmoved coolness threw ice on the explosion.

"Your mother has just brought them to show me," he went on. "They are charming boys. I do not intend to part from them. I shall take them to our house at Anzy, if it were only to save them from seeing their mother disguised like a——"

"Silence!" said Madame de La Baudraye imperatively. "What do you want of me that brought you here?"

"A power of attorney to receive our Uncle Silas' property."

Dinah took a pen, wrote two lines to Monsieur de Clagny, and desired her husband to call again in the afternoon.

At five o'clock, Monsieur de Clagny—who had been promoted to the post of attorney-general—enlightened Madame de La Baudraye as to her position; still, he undertook to arrange everything by a bargain with the old fellow, whose visit had been prompted by avarice alone. Monsieur de La Baudraye, to whom his wife's power of attorney was indispensable to enable him to deal with the business as he wished, purchased it by certain concessions. In the first place, he undertook to allow her ten thousand francs a year so long as she found it convenient—so the document was worded—to reside in Paris; the children, each on attaining the age of six, were to be placed in Monsieur de La Baudraye's keeping.

Finally, the lawyer extracted the payment of the allowance in advance.

Little La Baudraye, who came jauntily enough to say farewell to his wife and *his* children, appeared in a white india-rubber overcoat. He was so firm on his feet, and so exactly like the La Baudraye of 1836, that Dinah despaired of ever burying the dreadful little dwarf. From the garden, where he was smoking a cigar, the journalist could watch Monsieur de La Baudraye for so long as it took the little reptile to cross the forecourt, but that was enough for Lousteau; it was plain to him that the little man had intended to wreck every hope of his dying that his wife might have conceived.

This short scene made a considerable change in the writer's secret scheming. As he smoked a second cigar, he seriously reviewed the position.

His life with Madame de La Baudraye had hitherto cost him quite as much as it had cost her. To use the language of business, the two sides of the account balanced, and they could, if necessary, cry quits. Considering how small his income was, and how hardly he earned it, Lousteau regarded himself, morally speaking, as the creditor. It was, no doubt, a favorable moment for throwing the woman over. Tired at the end of three years of playing a comedy which never can become a habit, he was perpetually concealing his weariness; and this fellow, who was accustomed to disguise none of his feelings, compelled himself to wear a smile at home like that of a debtor in the presence of his creditor. This compulsion was every day more intolerable.

Hitherto the immense advantages he foresaw in the future had given him strength; but when he saw Monsieur de La Baudraye embark for the United States, as briskly as if it were to go down to Rouen in a steamboat, he ceased to believe in the future.

He went in from the garden to the pretty drawing-room, where Dinah had just taken leave of her husband.

“Étienne,” said Madame de La Baudraye, “do you know what my lord and master has proposed to me? In the event of my wishing to return to live at Anzy during his absence, he has left his orders, and he hopes that my mother’s good advice will weigh with me, and that I shall go back there with my children.”

“It is very good advice,” replied Lousteau drily, knowing the passionate disclaimer that Dinah expected, and indeed begged for with her eyes.

The tone, the words, the cold look, all hit the hapless woman so hard, who lived only in her love, that two large tears trickled slowly down her cheeks, while she did not speak a word, and Lousteau only saw them when she took out her handkerchief to wipe away these two beads of anguish.

“What is it, Didine?” he asked, touched to the heart by this excessive sensibility.

“Just as I was priding myself on having won our freedom,” said she, “at the cost of my fortune—by selling—what is most precious to a mother’s heart—selling my children!—for he is to have them from the age of six—and I cannot see them without going to Sancerre!—and that is torture! Ah, dear God! What have I done——?”

Lousteau knelt down by her and kissed her hands with a lavish display of coaxing and petting.

“You do not understand me,” said he. “I blame myself, for I am not worth such sacrifices, dear angel. I am, in a literary sense, a quite second-rate man. If the day comes when I can no longer cut a figure at the bottom of the newspaper, the editors will let me lie, like an old shoe flung into the rubbish heap. Remember, we tight-rope dancers have no retiring pension! The State would have too many clever men on its hands if it started on such a career of beneficence. I am forty-two, and I am as idle as a marmot. I feel it—I know it;” and he took her hand, “my love can only be fatal to you.

“As you know, at two-and-twenty I lived on Florine ; but what is excusable in a youth, what then seems smart and charming, is a disgrace to a man of forty. Hitherto we have shared the burden of existence, and it has not been lovely for this year and a half. Out of devotion to me you wear nothing but black, and that does me no credit.” Dinah gave one of those magnanimous shrugs which are worth all the words ever spoken. “Yes,” Étienne went on, “I know you sacrifice everything to my whims, even your beauty. And I, with a heart worn out in past struggles, a soul full of dark presentiments as to the future, I cannot repay your exquisite love with an equal affection. We were very happy—without a cloud—for a long time. Well, then, I cannot bear to see so sweet a poem end badly. Am I wrong?”

Madame de La Baudraye loved Étienne so truly, that this prudence, worthy of de Clagny, gratified her and stanchèd her tears.

“He loves me for my myself alone!” thought she, looking at him with smiling eyes.

After four years of intimacy, this woman’s love now combined every shade of affection which our powers of analysis can discern, and which modern society has created ; one of the most remarkable men of our age, whose death is a recent loss to the world of letters, Beyle (Stendhal), was the first to delineate them to perfection.

Lousteau could produce in Dinah the acute agitation which may be compared to magnetism, that upsets every power of the mind and body, and overcomes every instinct of resistance in a woman. A look from him, or his wand laid on hers, reduced her to implicit obedience. A kind word or a smile wreathed the poor woman’s soul with flowers ; a fond look elated, a cold look depressed her. When she walked, taking his arm and keeping step with him in the street or on the boulevard, she was so entirely absorbed in him that she lost all sense of herself. Fascinated by this fellow’s wit, magnet-

ized by his airs, his vices were but trivial defects in her eyes. She loved the puffs of cigar smoke that the wind brought into her room from the garden; she went to inhale them, and made no wry faces, hiding herself to enjoy them. She hated the publisher or the newspaper editor who refused Lousteau money on the ground of the enormous advances he had had already. She deluded herself so far as to believe that her bohemian was writing a novel, for which the payment was to come, instead of working off a debt long since incurred.

This, no doubt, is true love, and includes every mode of loving; the love of the heart and of the head—passion, caprice, and taste—to accept Beyle's definitions. Didine loved him so wholly, that in certain moments when her critical judgment, just by nature and constantly exercised since she had lived in Paris, compelled her to read to the bottom of Lousteau's soul, sense was still too much for reason, and suggested excuses.

"And what am I?" she replied. "A woman who has put herself outside the pale. Since I have sacrificed all a woman's honor, why should not you sacrifice to me some of a man's honor? Do we not live outside the limits of social conventionality? Why not accept from me what Nathan can accept from Florine? We will square accounts when we part, and only death can part us—you know. My happiness is your honor, Étienne, as my constancy and your happiness are mine. If I fail to make you happy, all is at an end. If I cause you a pang, condemn me.

"Our debts are paid; we have ten thousand francs a year, and between us we can certainly make eight thousand francs a year—I will write theatrical articles. With fifteen hundred francs a month we shall be as rich as Rothschild. Be quite easy. I will have some lovely dresses, and give you every day some gratified vanity, as on the first night of Nathan's play that——"

"And what about your mother, who goes to mass every day,

and wants to bring a priest to the house and make you give up this way of life?"

"Every one has a pet vice. You smoke, she preaches at me, poor woman! But she takes great care of the children, she takes them out, she is absolutely devoted, and idolizes me. Would you hinder her from crying?"

"What will be thought of me?"

"But we do not live for the world?" cried she, raising Étienne and making him sit by her. "Beside, we shall be married some day—we have the risks of a sea voyage——"

"I never thought of that," said Lousteau simply; and he added to himself: "Time enough to part when little La Baudraye is safe back again."

From that day forth Étienne lived in luxury; and Dinah, on first nights, could hold her own with the best-dressed women in Paris. Lousteau was so fatuous as to affect, among his friends, the attitude of a man overborne, bored to extinction, ruined by Madame de La Baudraye.

"Oh, what would I not give to the friend who would deliver me from Dinah! But no one ever can!" said he. "She loves me enough to throw herself out of the window if I told her."

The journalist was duly pitied; he would take precautions against Dinah's jealousy when he accepted an invitation. And then he was shamelessly unfaithful. Monsieur de Clagny, really in despair at seeing Dinah in such disgraceful circumstances when she might have been so rich, and in so wretched a position at the time when her original ambitions would have been fulfilled, came to warn her, to tell her—"You are betrayed," and she only replied, "I know it."

The lawyer was silenced; still he found his tongue to say one thing.

Madame de La Baudraye interrupted him when he had scarcely spoken a word.

"Do you still love me?" she asked.

"I would lose my soul for you!" he exclaimed, starting to his feet.

The hapless man's eyes flashed like torches, he trembled like a leaf, his throat was rigid, his hair thrilled to the roots; he believed he was so blessed as to be accepted as his idol's avenger, and this poor joy filled him with rapture.

"Why are you so startled?" said she, making him sit down again. "That is how I love him."

The lawyer understood this argument of mankind. And there were tears in the eyes of the judge, who had just condemned a man to death!

Lousteau's satiety, that odious conclusion of such illicit relations, had betrayed itself in a thousand little things, which are like grains of sand thrown against the panes of the little magical hut where those who love dwell and dream. These grains of sand, which grow to be pebbles, had never been discerned by Dinah till they were as big as rocks. Madame de La Baudraye had at last thoroughly understood Lousteau's character.

"He is," she had said to her mother, "a poet, defenseless against disaster, mean out of laziness, not for want of heart, and rather too prone to pleasure; in short, a great cat, whom it is impossible to hate. What would become of him without me? I hindered his marriage; he has no prospects. His talent would perish in privation."

"Oh, my Dinah!" Madame Piédefer had exclaimed, "what a hell you live in! What is the feeling that gives you strength enough to persist?"

"I will be a mother to him!" she had replied.

There are certain horrible situations in which we come to no decision till the moment when our friends discern our dishonor. We accept compromises with ourself so long as we escape a censor who comes to play prosecutor. Monsieur de Clagny, as clumsy as a tortured man, had been torturing Dinah.

"To preserve my love I will be all that Madame de Pompadour was to preserve her power," said she to herself when Monsieur de Clagny had left her. And this phrase sufficiently proves that her love was becoming a burden to her, and would presently be a toil rather than a pleasure.

The part now assumed by Dinah was horribly painful, and Lousteau made it no easier to play. When he wanted to go out after dinner he would perform the tenderest little farces of affection, and address Dinah in words full of devotion; he would take her by the chain, and when he had bruised her with it, even while he hurt her, the lordly ingrate would say: "Did I wound you?"

These false caresses and deceptions had degrading consequences for Dinah, who believed in a revival of his love. The mother, alas, gave way to the mistress with shameful readiness. She felt herself a mere plaything in a man's hands, and at last she confessed to herself—

"Well, then, I will be his plaything!" finding joy in it—the rapture of damnation.

When this woman, of a really manly spirit, pictured herself as living in solitude, she felt her courage fail. She preferred the anticipated and inevitable miseries of this fierce intimacy to the absence of the joys, which were all the more exquisite because they arose from the midst of remorse, of terrible struggles with herself, of a No persuaded to be YES. At every moment she seemed to come across the pool of bitter water found in a desert, and drunk with greater relish than the traveler would find in sipping the finest wines at a prince's table.

When Dinah wondered to herself at midnight:

"Will he come home, or will he not?" she was not alive again till she heard the familiar sound of Lousteau's boots and his well-known ring at the bell.

She would often try to restrain him by giving him pleasure; she would hope to be a match for her rivals, and leave them

no hold on that satiated heart. How many times a day would she rehearse the tragedy of "*Le Dernier Jour d' un condamné*" (*The Condemned's Last Day*), saying to herself: "To-morrow we part." And how often would a word, a look, a kiss full of apparently artless feeling, bring her back to the depths of her love!

It was terrible. More than once had she meditated suicide as she paced the little town garden where a few pale flowers bloomed. In fact, she had not yet exhausted the vast treasure of devotion and love which a loving woman bears in her heart.

The romance of "*Adolphe*" was her Bible, her study, for above all else she would not be an *Ellénore*. She allowed herself no tears, she avoided all the bitterness so cleverly described by the critic to whom we owe an analysis of this striking work; whose comments indeed seemed to Dinah almost superior to the book. And she read again and again this fine essay by the only real critic who has written in the "*Revue des Deux Mondes*," an article now printed at the beginning of the new edition of "*Adolphe*."

"No," she would say to herself, as she repeated the author's fateful words, "no, I will not 'give my requests the form of an order,' I will not 'fly to tears as a means of revenge,' I will not 'condemn the things I once approved without reservation,' I will not 'dog his footsteps with a prying eye;' if he plays truant, he shall not on his return 'see a scornful lip, whose kiss is an unanswerable command.' No, 'my silence shall not be a reproach nor my first word a quarrel.' I will not be like every other woman!" she went on, laying on her table the little yellow paper volume which had already attracted *Lousteau's* remark: "What! are you studying '*Adolphe*?'"
"If for one day only he should recognize my merits and say: 'That victim never uttered a cry!'—it will be all I ask. And beside, the others only have him for an hour; I have him for life!"

Thinking himself justified by his private tribunal in punishing his wife, Monsieur de La Baudraye robbed her to achieve his cherished enterprise of reclaiming three thousand acres of moorland, to which he had devoted himself ever since 1836, living like a mouse. He manipulated the property left by Monsieur Silas Piédefer so ingeniously that he contrived to reduce the proved value to eight hundred thousand francs while pocketing twelve hundred thousand. He did not announce his return ; but while his wife was enduring unspeakable woes, he was building farms, digging trenches, and ploughing rough ground with a courage that ranked him among the most remarkable agriculturists of the province.

The four hundred thousand francs he had filched from his wife were spent in three years on this undertaking, and the estate of Anzy was expected to return seventy-two thousand francs a year of net profits after the taxes were paid. The eight hundred thousand he invested at four and a half per cent. in the Funds, buying at eighty francs, at the time of the financial crisis brought about by the Ministry of the First of March, as it was called. By thus securing to his wife an income of forty-eight thousand francs he considered himself no longer in her debt. Could he not restore the odd twelve hundred thousand as soon as the four and a half per cents. had risen above a hundred ? He was now the greatest man in Sancerre, with the exception of one—the richest proprietor in France—whose rival he considered himself. He saw himself with an income of a hundred and forty thousand francs, of which ninety thousand formed the revenue from the lands he had entailed. Having calculated that beside this net income he paid ten thousand francs in taxes, three thousand in working expenses, ten thousand to his wife, and twelve hundred to his mother-in-law, he would say in the literary circles of Sancerre—

“I am reputed miserly, and said to spend nothing ; but my outlay amounts to twenty-six thousand five hundred francs a

year. And I have still to pay for the education of my two children ! I daresay it is not a pleasing fact to the Milauds of Nevers, but the second house of La Baudraye may yet have as noble a career as the first. I shall most likely go to Paris and petition the King of the French to grant me the title of count—Monsieur Roy is a count—and my wife would be pleased to be Madame la Comtesse.”

And this was said with such splendid coolness that no one would have dared to laugh at the little man. Only Monsieur Boirouge, the presiding judge, remarked—

“In your place, I should not be happy unless I had a daughter.”

“Well, I shall go to Paris before long——” said the baron.

In the early part of 1842 Madame de La Baudraye, feeling that she was to Lousteau no more than a reserve in the background, had again sacrificed herself absolutely to secure his comfort ; she had resumed her black raiment, but now it was in sign of mourning, for her pleasure was turning to remorse. She was too often put to shame not to feel the weight of the chain, and her mother found her sunk in those moods of meditation into which visions of the future cast unhappy souls in a sort of torpor.

Madame Piédefer, by the advice of her spiritual director, was on the watch for the moment of exhaustion, which the priest told her would inevitably supervene, and then she pleaded in behalf of the children. She restricted herself to urging that Dinah and Lousteau should live apart, not asking her to give him up. In real life these violent situations are not closed as they are in books, by death or cleverly contrived catastrophes ; they end far less poetically—in disgust, in the blighting of every flower of the soul, in the commonplace of habit, and very often too in another passion, which robs a wife of the interest which is traditionally ascribed to women. So, when commonsense, the law of social proprieties, family interest—all the mixed elements which, since the Restoration,

have been dignified by the name of Public Morals, out of sheer aversion to the name of the Catholic religion—where this is seconded by a sense of insults a little too offensive; when the fatigue of constant self-sacrifice has almost reached the point of exhaustion; and when, under these circumstances, a too cruel blow—one of those mean acts which a man never lets a woman know of unless he believes himself to be her assured master—puts the crowning touch to her revulsion and disenchantment, the moment has come for the intervention of the friend who undertakes the cure. Madame Piédefer had no great difficulty now in removing the film from her daughter's eyes.

She sent for Monsieur de Clagny, who completed the work by assuring Madame de La Baudraye that, if she would give up Étienne, her husband would allow her to keep the children and to live in Paris, and would restore her to the command of her own fortune.

“And what a life you are leading!” said he. “With care and judgment, and the support of some pious and charitable persons, you may have a salon and conquer a position. Paris is not Sancerre.”

Dinah left it to Monsieur de Clagny to negotiate a reconciliation with the old man.

Monsieur de La Baudraye had sold his wine well, he had sold his wool, he had felled his timber, and, without telling his wife, he had come to Paris to invest two hundred thousand francs in the purchase of a delightful residence in the Rue de l'Arcade, that was being sold in liquidation of an aristocratic house that was in difficulties. He had been a member of the Council for the Department since 1826, and now, paying ten thousand francs in taxes, he was doubly qualified for a peerage under the conditions of the new legislation.

Some time before the elections of 1842 he had put himself forward as candidate unless he were meanwhile called to the Upper House as a peer of France. At the same time, he asked

for the title of count, and for promotion to the higher grade of the Legion of Honor. In the matter of the elections, the Ministry approved of everything that could give strength to the dynastic nominations; now, in the event of Monsieur de La Baudraye being won over to the Government, Sancerre would be more than ever a rotten borough of royalism. Monsieur de Clagny, whose talents and modesty were more and more highly appreciated by the authorities, gave Monsieur de La Baudraye his support; he pointed out that by raising this enterprising agriculturist to the peerage, a guarantee would be offered to such important undertakings.

Monsieur de La Baudraye, then, a count, a peer of France, and commander of the Legion of Honor, was vain enough to wish to cut a figure with a wife and handsomely appointed house.

“He wanted to enjoy life,” he said.

He therefore addressed a letter to his wife, dictated by Monsieur de Clagny, begging her to live under his roof and to furnish the house, giving play to the taste of which the evidences, he said, had charmed him at the Castle of Anzy. The newly made count pointed out to his wife that while the interests of their property forbade his leaving Sancerre, the education of their boys required her presence in Paris. The accommodating husband desired Monsieur de Clagny to place sixty thousand francs at the disposal of Madame la Comtesse for the interior decoration of their mansion, requesting that she would have a marble tablet inserted over the gateway with the inscription: *HÔTEL DE LA BAUDRAYE*.

He then accounted to his wife for the money derived from the estate of Silas Piédefer, told her of the investment at four and a half per cent. of the eight hundred thousand francs he had brought from New York, and allowed her that income for her expenses, including the education of the children. As he would be compelled to stay in Paris during some part of the session of the House of Peers, he requested his wife to reserve

for him a little suite of rooms in an *entresol** over the kitchens.

"Bless me! why, he is growing young again—a gentleman! —a magnifico! What will he become next? It is quite alarming," said Madame de La Baudraye.

"He now fulfills all your wishes at the age of twenty," replied the lawyer.

The comparison of her future prospects with her present position was unendurable to Dinah. Only the day before, Anna de Fontaine had turned her head away in order to avoid seeing her bosom friend at the Chamarolles' school.

"I am a countess," said Dinah to herself. "I shall have the peer's blue hammer-cloth on my carriage, and the leaders of the literary world in my drawing-room—and I will look at her!" And it was this little triumph that told with all its weight at the moment of her rehabilitation, as the world's contempt had of old weighed on her happiness.

One fine day, in May, 1842, Madame de La Baudraye paid all her little household debts and left a thousand crowns on the top of the packet of receipted bills. After sending her mother and the children away to the Hôtel de La Baudraye, she awaited Lousteau, dressed ready to leave the house. When the deposed king of her heart came in to dinner, she said—

"I have upset the pot, my dear. Madame de La Baudraye requests the pleasure of your company at the Rocher de Cancale."

She carried off Lousteau, quite bewildered by the light and easy manners assumed by the woman who till that morning had been the slave of his least whim, for she too had been acting a farce for two months past.

"Madame de La Baudraye is figged out as if for a first night," said he—"une première" (a first), the slang abbreviation for a first performance.

*A half-story, between the first and second.

"Do not forget the respect you owe to Madame de La Baudraye," said Dinah gravely. "I do not mean to understand such a word as *figged out*."

"Didine a rebel?" said he, putting his arm round her waist.

"There is no such person as Didine; you have killed her, my dear," she replied, releasing herself. "I am taking you to the first performance of *Madame la Comtesse de La Baudraye*."

"It is true, then, that our insect is a peer of France?"

"The nomination is to be gazetted in this evening's 'Moniteur,' as I am told by Monsieur de Clagny, who is promoted to the court of appeal."

"Well, it is quite right," said the journalist. "The entomology of society ought to be represented in the Upper House."

"My friend, we are parting for ever," said Madame de La Baudraye, trying to control the trembling of her voice. "I have dismissed the two servants. When you go in, you will find the house in order, and no debts. I shall always feel a mother's affection for you, but in secret. Let us part calmly, without a fuss, like decent people."

"Have you had a fault to find with my conduct during the past six years?"

"None, but that you have spoilt my life and wrecked my prospects," said he in a hard tone. "You have read Benjamin Constant's book very diligently; you have even studied the last critique on it; but you have read with a woman's eyes. Though you have one of those superior intellects which would make the fortune of a poet, you have never dared to take the man's point of view."

"That book, my dear, is of both sexes. We agreed that books were male or female, dark or fair. In 'Adolphe' women see nothing but Ellénore; young men see only Adolphe; men of experience see Ellénore and Adolphe;

political men see the whole of social existence. You did not think it necessary to read the soul of Adolphe—any more than your critic indeed, who saw only Ellénore. What kills that poor fellow, my dear, is that he has sacrificed his future for a woman; that he never can be what he might have been—an ambassador, a minister, a chamberlain, a poet—and rich. He gives up six years of his energy at that stage of his life when a man is ready to submit to the hardships of any apprenticeship—to a petticoat, which he outstrips in the career of ingratitude, for the woman who has thrown over her first lover is certain sooner or later to desert the second. Adolphe is, in fact, a tow-haired German, who has not spirit enough to be false to Ellénore. There are Adolphes who spare their Ellénores all ignominious quarreling and reproaches, who say to themselves, ‘I will not talk of what I have sacrificed; I will not for ever be showing the stump of my wrist to that incarnate selfishness I have made my queen,’ as Rarmorny does in ‘The Fair Maid of Perth.’ But men like that, my dear, get cast aside.

“Adolphe is a man of birth, an aristocratic nature, who wants to get back into the high road to honors and recover his social birthright, his blighted position. You, at this moment, are playing both parts. You are suffering from the pangs of having lost your position, and think yourself justified in throwing over a hapless lover whose misfortune it has been that he fancied you so far superior as to understand that, though a man’s heart ought to be true, his sex may be allowed to indulge its caprices.”

“And do you suppose that I shall not make it my business to restore to you all you have lost by me? Be quite easy,” said Madame de La Baudraye, astounded by this attack. “Your Ellénore is not dying; and, if God gives her life, if you amend your ways, if you give up courtesans and actresses, we will find you a better match than a Félicie Cardot.”

The two lovers were sullen; Lousteau affected dejection, he

aimed at appearing hard and cold ; while Dinah, really distressed, listened to the reproaches of her heart.

“Why,” said Lousteau presently, “why not end as we ought to have begun—hide our love from all eyes, and see each other in secret ? ”

“Never ! ” cried the new-made countess, with an icy look. “Do you not comprehend that we are, after all, but finite creatures ? Our feelings seem infinite by reason of our anticipation of heaven, but here on earth they are limited by the strength of our physical being. There are some feeble, mean natures which may receive an endless number of wounds and live on ; but there are some more highly tempered souls which snap at last under repeated blows. You have——”

“Oh ! enough ! ” cried he. “No more copy ! Your dissertation is unnecessary, since you can justify yourself by merely saying—‘I have ceased to love.’ ”

“What ! ” she exclaimed in bewilderment. “Is it I who have ceased to love ? ”

“Certainly. You have calculated that I gave you more trouble, more vexation than pleasure, and you desert your partner——”

“I desert !——” cried she, clasping her hands.

“Have not you yourself just said ‘Never ? ’ ”

“Well, then, yes. *Never*,” she repeated vehemently.

This final *Never*, spoken in the fear of falling once more under Lousteau’s influence, was interpreted by him as the death-warrant of his power, since Dinah remained insensible to his sarcastic scorn.

The journalist could not suppress a tear. He was losing a sincere and unbounded affection. He had found in Dinah the gentlest la Vallière, the most delightful Pompadour that any egoist short of a king could hope for ; and, like a boy who has discovered that by dint of tormenting a cockchafer he has killed it, Lousteau shed a tear.

Madame de La Baudraye rushed out of the private room

where they had been dining, paid the bill, and fled home to the Rue de l'Arcade, scolding herself and thinking herself a brute.

Dinah, who had made her house a model of comfort, now metamorphosed herself. This double metamorphosis cost thirty thousand francs more than her husband had anticipated.

The fatal accident which in 1842 deprived the House of Orleans of the heir-presumptive having necessitated a meeting of the Chambers in August of that year, little La Baudraye came to present his titles to the Upper House sooner than he had expected, and then saw what his wife had done. He was so much delighted that he paid the thirty thousand francs without a word, just as he had formerly paid eight thousand for decorating La Baudraye.

On his return from the Luxembourg, where he had been presented according to custom by two of his peers—the Baron de Nucingen and the Marquis de Montriveau—the new count met the old Duc de Chaulieu, a former creditor, walking along, umbrella in hand, while he himself sat perched in a low chaise on which his coat-of-arms was resplendent, with the motto, *Deo sic patet fides et hominibus*. This contrast filled his heart with a large draught of the balm on which the middle-class has been getting drunk ever since 1840.

Madame de La Baudraye was shocked to see her husband improved and looking better than on the day of his marriage. The little dwarf, full of rapturous delight, at sixty-four triumphed in the life which had so long been denied him ; in the family, which his handsome Cousin Milaud of Nevers had declared he would never have ; and in his wife—who had asked Monsieur and Madame de Clagny to dinner to meet the curé of the parish and his two sponsors to the Chamber of Peers. He petted the children with fatuous delight.

The handsome display on the table met with his approval.

"These are the fleeces of the Berry sheep," said he, showing Monsieur de Nucingen the dish-covers surmounted by his newly won coronet. "They are of silver, you see!"

Though consumed by melancholy, which she concealed with the determination of a really superior woman, Dinah was charming, witty, and, above all, young again in her Court mourning.

"You might declare," cried La Baudraye to Monsieur de Nucingen, with a wave of his hand to his wife, "that the countess was not yet thirty."

"Ah, ha! Matame is a voman of dirty!" replied the baron, who was prone to time-honored remarks, which he took to be the small change of conversation.

"In every sense of the words," replied the countess. "I am, in fact, five-and-thirty, and mean to set up a little passion——"

"Oh, yes, my wife ruins me in curiosities and china images that——"

"She started that mania at an early age," said the Marquis de Montriveau with a smile.

"Yes," said La Baudraye, with a cold stare at the marquis, whom he had known at Bourges, "you know that in -25, -26, and -27 she picked up a million francs' worth of treasures. Anzy is a perfect museum."

"What a cool hand!" thought Monsieur de Clagny, as he saw this little country miser quite on the level of his new position.

But misers have savings of all kinds ready for use.

On the day after the vote on the Regency had passed the Chambers, the little count went back to Sancerre for the vintage, and resumed his old habits.

In the course of that winter, the Comtesse de La Baudraye, with the support of the attorney-general to the Court of Appeals, tried to form a little circle. Of course, she had an "at home" day, she made a selection among men of mark,

receiving none but those of serious purpose and ripe years. She tried to amuse herself by going to the opera, French and Italian. Twice a week she appeared there with her mother and Madame de Clagny, who was made by her husband to visit Dinah. Still, in spite of her cleverness, her charming manners, her fashionable stylishness, she was never really happy but with her children, on whom she lavished all her disappointed affection.

Worthy Monsieur de Clagny tried to recruit women for the countess' circle, and he succeeded ; but he was more successful among the advocates of piety than the women of fashion.

"And they bore her!" said he to himself with horror, as he saw his idol matured by grief, pale from remorse, and then, in all the splendor of recovered beauty, restored by a life of luxury and care for her boys. This devoted friend, encouraged in his efforts by her mother and by the curé, was full of expedient. Every Wednesday he introduced some celebrity from Germany, England, Italy, or Prussia to his dear countess ; he spoke of her as a quite exceptional woman to people to whom she hardly addressed two words ; but she listened to them with such deep attention that they went away fully convinced of her superiority. In Paris, Dinah conquered by silence, as at Sancerre she had conquered by loquacity. Now and then, some smart saying about affairs, or sarcasm on an absurdity, betrayed a woman accustomed to deal with ideas—the woman, who four years since, had given new life to Lous-teau's articles.

This phase was to the poor lawyer's hapless passion like the late season known as the Indian summer after a sunless year. He affected to be older than he was, to have the right to befriend Dinah without doing her an injury, and kept himself at a distance as though he were young, handsome, and compromising, like a man who has happiness to conceal. He tried to keep his little attentions a profound secret, and the trifling gifts which Dinah showed to every one ; and he en-

deavored to suggest a dangerous meaning for his little services.

"He plays at passion," said the countess, laughing. She made fun of Monsieur de Clagny to his face, and the lawyer said: "She notices me."

"I impress that poor man so deeply," said she to her mother, laughing, "that if I would say Yes, I believe he would say No."

One evening Monsieur de Clagny and his wife were taking his dear countess home from the theatre, and she was deeply pensive. They had been to the first performance of Léon Gozlan's first play, "*La Main Droite et la Main Gauche*" (The Right Hand and the Left).

"What are you thinking about?" asked the lawyer, alarmed at his idol's dejection.

This deep and persistent melancholy, though disguised by the countess, was a perilous malady for which Monsieur de Clagny knew no remedy; for true love is often clumsy, especially when it is not reciprocated. True love takes its expression from the character. Now, this good man loved after the fashion of *Alceste*, when Madame de La Baudraye wanted to be loved after the manner of *Philinte*. The meaner side of love can never get on with the misanthrope's loyalty. Thus, Dinah had taken care never to open her heart to this man. How could she confess to him that she sometimes regretted the slough she had left?

She felt a void in this fashionable life; she had no one for whom to dress, or whom to tell of her successes and triumphs. Sometimes the memory of her wretchedness came to her, mingled with memories of consuming joys. She would hate Lousteau for not taking any pains to follow her; she would have liked to get tender or furious letters from him.

Dinah made no reply, so Monsieur de Clagny repeated the question, taking the countess' hand and pressing it between his own with devout respect.

"Will you have the right hand or the left?" said she, smiling.

"The left," said he, "for I suppose you mean the truth or a fib."

"Well, then, I saw him," she said, speaking into the lawyer's ear. "And as I saw him looking so sad, so out of heart, I said to myself: 'Has he a cigar? Has he any money?'"

"If you wish for the truth, I can tell it you," said the lawyer. "He is living as a husband with Fanny Beaupré. You have forced me to tell you this secret; I should never have told you, for you might have suspected me perhaps of an ungenerous motive."

Madame de La Baudraye grasped his hand.

"Your husband," said she to her chaperon, "is one of the rarest souls! Ah! Why——"

She shrank into her corner, looking out of the window, but she did not finish her sentence, of which the lawyer could guess the end: "Why had not Lousteau a little of your husband's generosity of heart?"

This information served, however, to cure Dinah of her melancholy; she threw herself into the whirl of fashion. She wished for success, and she achieved it; still, she did not make much way with women and found it difficult to get introductions.

In the month of March, Madame Piédefer's friends the priests and Monsieur de Clagny made a fine stroke by getting Madame de La Baudraye appointed receiver of subscriptions for the great charitable work founded by Madame de Carcado. Then she was commissioned to collect from the royal family their donations for the benefit of the sufferers from the earthquake at Guadeloupe. The Marquise d'Espard, to whom Monsieur de Canalis read the list of ladies thus appointed, one evening at the Italian opera, said, on hearing that of the countess—

"I have lived a long time in the world, and I can remem-

ber nothing finer than the manœuvres undertaken for the rehabilitation of Madame de La Baudraye."

In the early spring, which, by some whim of our planets, smiled on Paris in the first week of March in 1843, making the Champs-Élysées green and leafy before Longchamp, Fanny Beaupré's attaché had seen Madame de La Baudraye several times without being seen by her. More than once he was stung to the heart by one of those promptings of jealousy and envy, familiar to those who are born and bred provincials, when he beheld his former mistress comfortably ensconced in a handsome carriage, well dressed, with dreamy eyes, and his two little boys, one at each window. He accused himself with all the more virulence because he was waging war with the sharpest poverty of all—poverty unconfessed. Like all essentially light and frivolous natures, he cherished the singular point of honor, which consists in never derogating in the eyes of one's own little public, which makes men on the Bourse commit crimes to escape expulsion from the temple of the goddess Per-cent., and has given some criminals courage enough to perform acts of virtue.

Lousteau dined and breakfasted and smoked as if he were a rich man. Not for an inheritance would he have bought any but the dearest cigars, for himself as well as for the playwright or author with whom he went into the store. The journalist took his walks abroad in patent-leather shoes; but he was constantly afraid of an execution on goods which, to use the bailiff's slang, had already received the "last sacrament." Fanny Beaupré had nothing left to pawn, and her salary was pledged to pay her debts. After exhausting every possible advance of pay from newspapers, magazines, and publishers, Étienne knew not of what ink he could churn gold. Gambling-houses, so ruthlessly suppressed, could no longer, as of old, cash I O U's drawn over the green table by beggary in despair. In short, the journalist was reduced to such extremity that he

had just borrowed a hundred francs of the poorest of his friends, Bixiou, from whom he had never yet asked for a franc. What distressed Lousteau was not the fact of owing five thousand francs, but seeing himself bereft of his elegance, and of the furniture purchased at the cost of so many privations, and added to by Madame de La Baudraye.

On April the 3d, a yellow poster, torn down by the porter after being displayed on the wall, announced the sale of a handsome suite of furniture on the following Saturday, the day fixed for sales under legal authority. Lousteau was taking a walk, smoking cigars, and seeking ideas—for, in Paris, ideas are in the air, they smile on you from a street corner, they splash up with a spurt of mud from under the wheels of a cab! Thus loafing, he had been seeking ideas for articles and subjects for novels for a month past, and had found nothing but friends who carried him off to dinner or to the play, and who intoxicated his woes, telling him that champagne would inspire him.

“Beware,” said the virulent Bixiou one night, the man who would at the same moment give a comrade a hundred francs and stab him to the heart with a sarcasm, “if you go to sleep drunk every night, you are certain one day to wake up mad.”

On the day before, the Friday, the unhappy wretch, although he was accustomed to poverty, felt like a man condemned to death. Of old he would have said:

“Well, the furniture is very old; I will buy new.”

But he was incapable now of literary legerdemain. Publishers, undermined by piracy, paid badly; the newspapers made close bargains with hard-driven writers, as the opera managers did with tenors that sang flat.

He walked on, his eye on the crowd, though seeing nothing, a cigar in his mouth, and his hands in his pockets, every feature of his face twitching, and an affected smile on his lips. Then he saw Madame de La Baudraye go by in a carriage;

she was going to the boulevard by the Rue de la Chaussée d'Antin to drive in the Bois.

"There is nothing else left!" said he to himself, and he went home to smarten himself up.

That evening, at seven, he arrived in a hackney-coach at Madame de La Baudraye's door, and begged the porter to send a note up to the countess—a few lines, as follows:

"Would Madame la Comtesse do Monsieur Lousteau the favor of receiving him for a moment, and at once!"

This note was sealed with a seal which as lovers they had both used. Madame de La Baudraye had had the word *Parceque* (because) engraved on a genuine Oriental carnelian—a potent word—a woman's word—the word that accounts for everything, even for the Creation.

The countess had just finished dressing to go to the opera; Friday was her night in turn for her box. At the sight of this seal she turned pale.

"I will come," she said, tucking the note into her dress.

She was firm enough to conceal her agitation, and begged her mother to see the children put to bed. She then sent for Lousteau, and received him in a boudoir, next to the great drawing-room, with open doors. She was going to a ball after the opera, and was wearing a beautiful dress of brocade in stripes alternately plain and flowered with pale blue. Her gloves, trimmed with tassels, showed off her beautiful white arms. She was shimmering with lace and all the dainty trifles required by fashion. Her hair dressed, in the style of Mme. de Sévigné, gave her a look of elegance; a necklace of pearls lay on her bosom like bubbles on snow.

"What is the matter, monsieur?" said the countess, putting out her foot from below her skirt to rest it on a velvet cushion. "I thought, I hoped, I was quite forgotten."

"If I should reply *Never*, you would refuse to believe me,"

said Lousteau, who remained standing, or walked about the room, chewing the flowers he plucked from the flower-stands full of plants that scented the room.

For a moment silence reigned. Madame de La Baudraye, studying Lousteau, saw that he was dressed as the most fastidious dandy might have been.

"You are the only person in the world who can help me, or hold out a plank to me—for I am drowning, and have already swallowed more than one mouthful——" said he, standing still in front of Dinah, and seeming to yield to an overpowering impulse. "Since you see me here, it is because my affairs are going to the devil."

"That is enough," said she; "I understand."

There was another pause, during which Lousteau turned away, took out his handkerchief, and seemed to wipe away a tear.

"How much do you want, Étienne?" she went on in motherly tones. "We are at this moment old comrades; speak to me as you would to—to Bixiou."

"To save my furniture from vanishing into thin air to-morrow morning at the auction mart, eighteen hundred francs! To repay my friends, as much again! Three quarters' rent to the landlord—whom you know. My 'uncle' wants five hundred francs——"

"And you—to live on?"

"Oh! I have my pen——"

"It is heavier to lift than any one could believe who reads your articles," said she, with a subtle smile. "I have not such a sum as you need, but come to-morrow at eight; the bailiff will surely wait till nine, especially if you bring him away to pay him."

She must, she felt, dismiss Lousteau, who affected to be unable to look at her; she herself felt such pity as might cut every social Gordian knot.

"Thank you," she added, rising and offering her hand to

Lousteau. "Your confidence has done me good ! It is long indeed since my heart has known such joy——"

Lousteau took her hand and pressed it tenderly to his heart.

"A drop of water in the desert—and sent by the hand of an angel ! God always does things handsomely !"

He spoke half in jest and half pathetically ; but, believe me, as a piece of acting it was as fine as Talma's in his famous part of Leicester, which was played throughout with touches of this kind. Dinah felt his heart beating through his coat ; it was throbbing with satisfaction, for the journalist had had a narrow escape from the hawks of justice ; but it also beat with a very natural fire at seeing Dinah rejuvenescent and restored by wealth.

Madame de La Baudraye, stealing an examining glance at Étienne, saw that his expression was in harmony with the flowers of love, which, as she thought, had blossomed again in that throbbing heart ; she tried to look once into the eyes of the man she had loved so well, but the seething blood rushed through her veins and mounted to her brain. Their eyes met with the same fiery glow as had encouraged Lousteau on the quay by the Loire to crumple Dinah's India muslin gown. The Bohemian put his arm round her waist, she yielded, and their cheeks were touching.

"Here comes my mother, hide !" cried Dinah in alarm. And she hurried forward to intercept Madame Piédefer.

"Mamma," said she—this word was to the stern old lady a coaxing expression which never failed of its effect—"will you do me a great favor ? Take the carriage and go yourself to my banker, Monsieur Mongenod, with a note I will give you, and bring back six thousand francs. Come, come, it is an act of charity ; come into my room."

And she dragged away her mother, who seemed very anxious to see whom it was that her daughter had been talking with in the boudoir.

Two days afterward, Madame Piédefer held a conference

with the curé of the parish. After listening to the lamentations of the old mother, the priest said very gravely :

“Any moral regeneration which is not based on a strong religious sentiment, and carried out in the bosom of the church, is built on sand. The many means of grace enjoined by the Catholic religion, small as they are, and not understood, are so many dams necessary to restrain the violence of evil promptings. Persuade your daughter to perform all her religious duties, and we shall save her yet.”

Within ten days of this meeting the Hôtel de La Baudraye was shut up. The countess, the children, and her mother, in short, the whole household, including a tutor, had gone away to Sancerre, where Dinah intended to spend the summer. She was everything that was nice to the count, people said.

And so the Muse of Sancerre had simply come back to family and married life ; but certain evil tongues declared that she had been compelled to come back, as the little peer's wishes would no doubt be fulfilled—he hoped for a little girl.

Gatien and Monsieur Gravier lavished every care, every servile attention, on the handsome countess. Gatien, who during Madame de La Baudraye's long absence had been to Paris to learn the arts of *lionnerie* or dandyism, was supposed to have a good chance of finding favor in the eyes of the disenchanted Superior Woman. Others bet on the tutor ; Madame Piédefer urged the claims of religion.

In 1844, about the middle of June, as the Comte de La Baudraye was taking a walk on the mall at Sancerre with the two fine little boys, he met Monsieur Milaud, the public prosecutor, who was at Sancerre on business, and said to him—

“These are my children, cousin.”

“Ah, ha ! so these are our children !” replied the lawyer, with a mischievous twinkle.

PARIS, *June, 1843—August, 1844.*

LES EMPLOYÉS.

TRANSLATED BY ELLEN MARRIAGE.

*To the Contessa Serafina San Severino, née
Porcia.*

Being obliged to read everything, in the endeavor to repeat nothing, I chanced the other day to turn over the pages of a collection of three hundred more or less broadly humorous tales written by Il Bandello, a sixteenth-century writer, but little known in France, whose works have only lately been republished in extenso in the compact Florentine edition entitled Raccolta di Novellieri Italiani. As I glanced for the first time through Il Bandello's original text, your name, madame, and the name of the count, suddenly caught my eyes, and made so vivid an impression upon my mind that it seemed that I had actually seen you. Then I discovered, not without surprise, that every story, were it but five pages long, was prefaced by a familiar letter of dedication to a king or queen, or to one of the most illustrious personages of the time. I saw the names of noble houses of Genoa, Florence, Milan, and Il Bandello's native Piedmont. Sforze, Dorie, Fregosi, and Frascatori; the Dolcini of Mantua, the San Severini of Crema, the Visconti of Milan, and the Guidoboni of Tortona, all appear in his pages; there is a Dante Alighieri (some one of that name was then, it seems, in existence), stories are inscribed to Queen Margaret of France, to the Emperor of Germany, the King of Bohemia, the Archduke Maximilian. There are Sauli, Medici, Soderini, Pallavicini, and a Bentivoglio of
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Bologna ; there are Scaligeri and Colonne ; there is a Spanish Cardona ; and, as for France, Anne de Poulignac, Princesse de Marcillac, and Comtesse de la Rochefoucauld, the Marignys, Cardinal d'Armagnac, and the Bishop of Cahors—all the great company of the time in short—are delighted and flattered by a correspondence with Boccaccio's successor. I saw, likewise, how much nobility there was in Il Bandello's own character ; for while he adorns his pages with such illustrious names as these, he is true to his personal friendships. After the Signora Gallerana, Countess of Bergamo, comes the name of a doctor to whom he inscribes his tale of Romeo e Giulietta ; after the signora, molto magnifica, Hipolita Visconti ed Attellana follows the name of Livio Liviana, a simple captain of light cavalry ; a preacher succeeds the Duke of Orleans, and next in order after one Riario you find Messer magnifico, Girolamo Ungaro, mercante Lucchese, a virtuous personage for whose benefit it is narrated how un gentiluomo navarese sposa una che era sua sorella e figliuola, non lo sapendo ; the subject being furnished by the Queen of Navarre.

Then I thought that I, like Il Bandello, might put one of my stories under the protection of una virtuosa, gentilissima illustrissima Contessa Serafina San Severino, telling her truths that might be taken for flatteries. Why should I not confess that I am proud to bear my testimony here and elsewhere to the fact that fair and noble friendships, now as in the sixteenth century, are and have been the solace of men of letters wherever the fashion of the day may rank them ? that in those friendships they have ever found consolation for slander, insult, and harsh criticism, while the approval of such an audience enables them to rise above the cares and vexations of the literary

life? And because you found such pleasure in the mental activity of Paris, that brain of the world; because, with your Venetian subtlety of intellect, you understood it so well; because you loved Gérard's sumptuous salon (now closed to us), in which all the European celebrities of our quarter of the century might be seen, as we see them in Il Bandello's pages; because the great and dangerous Siren's fêtes and magical ceremonies struck you with wonder, and you gave me your impressions of Paris so simply—for all these reasons, surely, you will extend your protection to this picture of a sphere of life which you cannot have known, albeit it is not lacking in character.

I could wish that I had some great poem to offer instead to you whose outward form is the visible expression of all the poetry in your heart and soul; but since a poor writer of prose can only give what he has, the inadequacy of the offering may perhaps be redeemed, in your eyes, by the respectful homage paid by a deep and sincere admiration, such as you can inspire.

DE BALZAC.

IN Paris, where there is a certain family likeness among students and thinkers who live under similar conditions, you must have seen many faces not unlike M. Rabourdin's at the point at which this history takes up his career. M. Rabourdin at that time was a chief clerk in a most important Government department. He was a man of forty, with hair of so pretty a shade of gray, that women really might love to have it so; it was just the tint that softens the expression of a melancholy face. There was plenty of light in the blue eyes; his complexion, though still fair, was sanguine, and there were little patches of bright red in it; his mouth was grave; his nose and forehead resembled those features in portraits of Louis XV.

In person he was tall and spare, as thin, indeed, as if he had but recently recovered from an illness; his gait suggested something of a loungeur's indolence, something, too, of the meditative mood of a busy man.

If this portrait gives the man's character by anticipation, his costume may contribute to set it further in relief; Rabourdin invariably wore a long, blue overcoat, a black stock, a double-breasted vest à la *Robespierre*, black trousers without straps, gray silk stockings, and low shoes. At eight every morning, punctual as the clock, he sallied forth duly shaven and ballasted with a cup of coffee, and went, always along the same streets, to the office, looking so prim and tidy that you might have taken him for an Englishman on the way to his embassy. By these tokens you discern the father of a family, a man that has little of his own way in his own house, and plenty of business cares to worry him at the office; and yet withal sufficient of a philosopher to take life as it is; an honest man, loving and serving his country without blinking the difficulties in the way of getting the right thing done; a prudent man, since he knows something of human nature; a man whose manner to women is exquisitely polite because he expects nothing of them. Lastly, he was a man of very considerable attainments, kindly to his inferiors, apt to keep his equals at a distance, and to stand on his dignity with his chiefs.

At this period of his life you would have noticed that he wore a certain resigned, indifferent air; he seemed to have buried his youthful illusions, and renounced personal ambitions; certain signs indicated that though discouraged he had not yet given up his early projects in disgust, but he persisted in his work rather for the sake of employing his faculties than from any hope of a doubtful triumph. He wore no "decorations," and occasionally blamed himself for the weakness of wearing the order of the Lily in the early days of the Restoration.

There were certain mysterious elements in Rabourdin's life. His father he had never known. His mother had lived in luxury and splendor; she had a fine carriage, she was always beautifully dressed, her life was a round of gayety; her son remembered her as a marvelously beautiful and seldom-seen vision. She left him scarcely anything when she died; but she had given him the ordinary imperfect school education which develops great ambitions and little capacity for realizing them. Then he left the Lycée Napoléon only a few days before her death to enter a Government office as a supernumerary at the age of sixteen. Some unknown influence promptly obtained the position for him. At twenty-two Rabourdin became senior clerk; he was chief clerk at twenty-five. After this, the patronage which had brought the young fellow thus far on in life showed itself in but one more instance. It procured him an entrance to the house of one M. Leprince, a retired auctioneer, reputed to be wealthy. M. Leprince was a widower with an only daughter. Xavier Rabourdin fell over head and ears in love with Mlle. Célestine Leprince, then aged seventeen, and endowed (so it was said) with two hundred thousand francs for her portion. Men in the highest position might well turn their eyes in the direction of this young lady. A tall, handsome girl with an admirable figure, she had inherited the gifts of an artist mother, who brought her up carefully. Mlle. Leprince spoke several languages, and had acquired some smatterings of learning—a dangerous advantage, which compels a woman to be very careful if she would avoid any appearance of pedantry. And Célestine's mother, blinded by unwise tenderness, had held out hopes that could not be realized; to hear her talk, nobody short of a duke, an ambassador, a marshal of France, or a cabinet minister could give her Célestine her rightful social position. And, indeed, Mlle. Leprince's manners, language, and ways were fitted for the best society. Her dress was too handsome and elegant for a girl of her age; a husband could

give Célestine nothing but happiness. And, what was more, the mother (who died a year after her marriage) had spoiled her with such continual indulgence, that a lover had a tolerably difficult part to play.

A man had need have plenty of courage to undertake such a wife! Middle-class suitors took fright and retired. Xavier, an orphan with nothing but his salary as chief clerk in a Government office, was brought forward by M. Leprince, but for a long time Célestine would not hear of him. Not that Mlle. Leprince had any objection to her suitor himself; he was young, handsome, and very much in love, but she had no mind to be called Mme. Rabourdin.

In vain M. Leprince told his daughter that Rabourdin was of the stuff of which cabinet ministers are made. Célestine retorted that a man of the name of Rabourdin would never rise to be anything under the Bourbons, with much more to the same purpose. Driven thus from his intrenchments, her parent was guilty of a grave indiscretion; he hinted to Célestine that her suitor would be Rabourdin *de* somewhere or other before he could reach the age that qualifies for the Chamber. Xavier was sure to be a master of requests before very long, and secretary-general of his department. After those two steps, the young fellow would be launched into the upper regions of the administration some day; beside, Rabourdin would inherit a fortune and a name by a certain will, as he (Leprince) knew of his own knowledge. The marriage took place.

Rabourdin and his wife believed in the mysterious power discovered to them by the old auctioneer. Hope and the improvidence counseled by love in the early days of married life led the young couple into expense; and in five years M. and Mme. Rabourdin had spent nearly a hundred thousand francs of their principal. Célestine not unreasonably took alarm when promotion did not come, and it was by her wish that the remaining hundred thousand francs of her portion were put into

land. The investment only paid a very low interest; but then some day or other old M. Leprince would leave his money to them, and their prudent self-denial would receive the reward of a pleasant competence.

But old M. Leprince saw that his son-in-law had lost his interest, and tried, for his daughter's sake, to repair the secret check. He risked a part of his capital in a very promising speculation; but the poor man became involved in one of the liquidations of the firm of Nucingen, and worried over his losses until he died, leaving nothing behind him but some ten fine pictures which adorned his daughter's drawing-room, and a little old-fashioned furniture which she consigned to the attics.

After eight years of vain expectation, Mme. Rabourdin at last grasped the idea that her husband's fatherly providence must have died suddenly, and that the will had been mislaid or suppressed. Two years before Leprince's death, when the place of the head of the division fell vacant, it was given to one M. de la Billardière, a relative of a deputy of the Right, who became a member of the Government in 1823. It was enough to drive a man to resign. But how could Rabourdin give up a salary of eight thousand francs (to say nothing of an occasional bonus) when he was living up to his income, and three-fourths of it came from this source? Beside, would he not have a right to a pension after a few years of patience? But what a fall was this for a woman whose high pretensions at the outset were almost justifiable, a woman who was supposed to be destined for great things!

Mme. Rabourdin fulfilled the promise of Mlle. Leprince. She possessed the elements of an apparent superiority which pleases in society; her great acquirements enabled her to speak to every one in his own language. And her ability was genuine; she had an independent mind of no common order; her conversation was as charming for its variety as for the originality of her ideas. Such qualities would have shone to

advantage and profit in a queen or an ambassadress ; they were worth little in the inevitably humdrum routine of domestic life. If people talk well, they are apt to want an audience ; they like to talk at length, and sometimes they grow wearisome. To satisfy her intellectual cravings, Mme. Rabourdin received her friends one day in the week, and went a good deal into society, for the sake of the admiration to which she was accustomed.

Those who know life in Paris will understand what a woman of this stamp must suffer when she continually feels the pinch of straitened means at home. In spite of all the senseless rhetorical abuse of money, you must take your stand, if you live in Paris, at the foot of a column of figures ; you must bow down before arithmetic, and kiss the cloven foot of the Golden Calf.

Given an income of twelve thousand francs a year, to meet all the expenses of a household consisting of father, mother, and two children, with a housemaid and a cook, and to live on a second-floor flat in the Rue Duphot at a rent of a hundred louis—what a problem was this ! Before you begin to estimate the gross expenditure of the house, you must deduct the wife's expenses for dress and hired carriages (for dress is the first thing to consider) ; then see how much remains to pay for the education of two children (a girl of seven and a boy of nine, who already cost two thousand francs, in spite of a free scholarship), and you will find that Mme. Rabourdin could barely allow her husband thirty francs a month. Most married men in Paris are, in fact, in the same predicament if they do not wish to be thought monsters of cruelty.

And so it had come to pass that the woman who believed that she was born to shine as one of the queens of society was obliged to exert her intellect and all her powers in a sordid struggle for which she was quite unprepared—a daily wrestling-match with account books. And even so there had been bitter mortifications to suffer. She had dismissed her man-

servant after her father's death. Most women grow weary of the daily strain. They grumble for a while, and then yield to their fate ; but Célestine's ambition, so far from declining, was only increased by the difficulties. If she could not overcome obstacles, she would clear them from her path. Such complications in the machinery of existence ought to be abolished ; and if the Gordian knot could not be untied, genius should cut it. So far from accepting the shabby lot of the lower middle-class housewife, Célestine grew impatient because her great future career was delayed. Fate had not done fairly by her, she thought.

For Célestine honestly believed that she was meant for great things. And perhaps she was right. Perhaps in great circumstances she might have shown herself great. Perhaps she was not in her place. Let us admit that among women, as among men, there are certain types that can mould society to their own wish. But as, in the natural world, not every young sapling shoots up into a tree, and small fry are more numerous than full-grown fish, so, in the artificial world called society, many a human creature who might have done great things, many an Athanase Granson,* is doomed to perish undeveloped like the seeds that fall on stony ground. Of course there are domesticated women, agreeable women, and costly feminine works of art ; there are women born to be mothers, wives, or mistresses ; there are wholly intellectual and wholly material women ; even as among men there are soldiers, artists, craftsmen, mathematicians, merchants, poets, and men who understand nothing beyond money-making, agriculture, or public business. And then the irony of fate comes in and works strange contradictions ; many are called, but few chosen, and the law of spiritual election holds equally good in worldly concerns.

Mme. Roubourdin, in her own opinion, was eminently fitted to counsel a statesman, to kindle an artist's soul, to further

* See "Jealousies of a Country Town."

the interests of an inventor and to help him in his struggles, or to devote herself to the half-political, half-financial schemes of a Nucingen, and to make a brilliant figure with a large fortune. Perhaps this was how she tried to account to herself for the disgust that she felt for laundress' bills, for the daily schemes of kitchen expenditure and the little economies and cares of a small establishment. In the life that she liked she took a high place. And since she was keenly sensitive to the prickings of the thorns in a lot which might be compared with the position of St. Lawrence upon a gridiron, some outcry surely was only to be expected of her. And so it befell that in paroxysms of thwarted ambition, during sharp throbs of pain, given by wounded vanity, Célestine threw the blame upon Xavier Rabourdin. Was it not incumbent upon her husband to give her a suitable position? If she had been a man, she certainly would have had energy enough to realize a fortune quickly and make a much-loved wife happy. He was "too honest," she said; and this reproach in the mouths of some women is a good as a certificate of idiocy.

Célestine would sketch out magnificent plans for him, ignoring all the practical difficulties put in the way by men and circumstances; and, after the manner of women when under the influence of intense feeling, she became, in theory, more Machiavellian than a Gondreville, and Maxime de Trailles himself was hardly such a scoundrel. At such times Célestine's imagination conceived all possibilities; she saw herself in the whole extent of her ideas. Rabourdin, meanwhile, with his practical experience, was unmoved from the outset by these glorious dreams. And Célestine, somewhat dashed, came to the conclusion that her husband was a narrow-minded man, whose views were neither bold enough nor comprehensive enough. Unconsciously she began to form an utterly false idea of her companion in life. She snuffed him out continually, to begin with, by her brilliant arguments; and when he began to explain matters to her, she was apt to cut him

short. Her own ideas were wont to occur to her in flashes, and she was afraid to lose the spark of wit.

She had known from the very first days of their married life that Rabourdin admired and loved her; and therefore she treated him with careless security. She set herself above all the laws of married life and the courtesies of familiarity, leaving all her little shortcomings to be pardoned in the name of Love; and as she never corrected herself, she always had her way. A man in this position is, as it were, confronting a schoolmaster who cannot or will not believe that the boy whom he used to keep in order has grown up. As Mme. de Staël once received a remark made by a "greater man" than herself, by exclaiming before a whole roomful of people: "Do you know that you have just said something very profound?" so Mme. Rabourdin would say of her husband: "There is sometimes sense in what he says!" Gradually her opinion of Xavier began to show itself in little ways. There was a lack of respect in her manner and attitude toward him. And all unconsciously she lowered him in the eyes of others, for everybody all the world over takes a wife's estimate into account in forming an opinion of a man; it is the universal rule in taking a precognition of character; *un préavis*, as the Genevese say, or, to be more accurate, *un préavisse*.

When Rabourdin saw the mistake that he had made through love, it was too late. The bent had been taken; he suffered in silence. In some rare natures the power to feel is as great as the power of thought, a great soul supplements a highly organized brain; and, after the manner of these, Rabourdin was his wife's advocate at the bar of his judgment. Nature (he told himself) had given her a role to play; it was entirely by his fault that she had been cheated of her part. She was like a thoroughbred racer harnessed to a cart full of flints—she was not happy. He took the blame upon himself, in short. His wife had inoculated him with her belief in herself by dint of repeating the same things over and over again. Ideas are

infectious in family life. The 9th Thermidor, like many other portentous events, was brought about by feminine influence.

Urged on in this way by Célestine's ambition, Rabourdin had long been meditating how to satisfy it; but he hid his hopes from her to save her the torment of suspense. He had made up his mind, good man that he was, to make his way upward in the administration by knocking a very considerable hole in it. He wanted, in the first place, to bring about a revolution in the civil service, a radical reform of a kind that puts a man at the head of some section of society; but as he was incapable of scheming a general overturn for his particular benefit, he was revolving projects of reform in his own mind and dreaming of a triumph to be nobly won. The idea was both generous and ambitious. Perhaps few employés have not thought of such plans; but among officials, as among artists, there are many abortive designs for one that sees the light. Which saying brings us back to Buffon's apophthegm: "Genius is patience."

Rabourdin's position enabled him to study the French administrative system and to watch its working. Chance set his speculative faculties moving in the sphere of his practical experience (this, by the way, is the secret of many a man's achievements), and Rabourdin invented a new system of administration. Knowing the men with whom he had to do, he respected the machinery then in existence, still in existence, and likely to remain in existence for a long while to come, every generation being scared by the thought of reconstruction; but while Rabourdin respected the mechanism as a whole, nobody, he thought, could refuse to simplify it.

How to employ the same energy to better purpose—here, to his thinking, lay the problem. Reduced to its simplest expression, his plan consisted in redistributing the burden of taxation in such a way that it should fall less heavily on the nation, while there should be no falling off in the revenues of

the State ; and, furthermore, in those days when the budget provoked such frantic discussion, he meant to make the undiminished national income go twice as far as before.

Long practical experience had made it clear to Rabourdin that perfection is gradually attained by a succession of simple modifications. Economy is simplification. If you simplify, you dispense with a superfluous wheel ; and, consequently, something must go. His system, therefore, involved changes which found expression in a new administrative nomenclature. Herein, probably, you may find the reason of the unpopularity of the innovator. Necessary suppressions are taken amiss from the outset ; they threaten a class which does not readily adapt itself to a change of environment. Rabourdin's real greatness lay in this—he restrained the inventor's enthusiasm, while he sought patiently to gear one measure into another so as to avoid unnecessary friction, and left time and experience to demonstrate the excellence of each successive modification. This idea of the gradual nature of the change must not be lost sight of in a rapid survey of the system, or it will seem impossible to bring about so great a result. It is worth while, therefore, incomplete as Rabourdin's disclosures were, to indicate the starting-point from which he meant to embrace the whole administrative horizon. The account of his scheme, moreover, brings us to the very core of the intrigues of which it was the cause, and may throw a light beside upon some present-day evils.

Rabourdin had been deeply impressed by the hardships of the lives of subordinate officials. He asked himself why they were falling into discredit. He searched into the causes of their decline, and found them in the little semi-revolutions, the back eddies, as it were, of the great storm of 1789. Historians of great social movements have never examined into these, though, as a matter of fact, they made our manners and customs what they are.

In former times, under the monarchy, armies of officials did

not exist. They were then few in number and under the direct control of a prime minister, who was always in communication with the crown. In this way the official staff might be said to serve the King almost directly. The chiefs of these zealous servitors were simply plain *premiers commis*—first clerks. In all departments not under his majesty's direct control—such as the taxes, for instance—the staff were to their chiefs pretty much as the clerks in a counting-house are to their employer; they were receiving a training which was to put them in the way of getting on in life. In this way every point in the official circumference was in close connection with the centre, and received its impetus therefrom. Consequently, there was devotion on one side and trust on the other in those days.

Since 1789 the State, or, if you like to have it so, the Country, has taken the place of the sovereign. The clerks no longer take their instructions directly from one of the first magistrates in the realm. In our day, in spite of our fine ideas of La Patrie, they are government employés, while their chiefs are drifted hither and thither by every wind that blows from a quarter known as the ministry, and the ministry cannot tell to-day whether to-morrow will find it in existence. As routine business must always be dispatched, there is always a fluctuating number of supernumeraries who cannot be dispensed with, and yet are liable to dismissal at a moment's notice. All of these naturally are anxious to be "established clerks." And thus bureaucracy, the giant power wielded by pigmies, came into the world. Possibly Napoleon retarded its influence for a time, for all things and all men were forced to bend to his will; but none the less the heavy curtain of bureaucracy was drawn between the right thing to be done and the right man to do it. Bureaucracy was definitely organized, however, under a constitutional government with a natural kindness for mediocrity, a predilection for categorical statements and reports, a government as fussy and meddle-

some, in short, as a small storekeeper's wife. Cabinet ministers' lives became a continual struggle with some four hundred petty minds led by a dozen or so of restless and intriguing spirits. It was a delightful spectacle for the rank and file of the service. They hastened to make themselves indispensable, hampering energy with documents, thereby creating a *vis inertiae*, styled the Report. Let us explain the Report :

When kings had ministers, and they only began this practice under Louis XV., they were wont to have a report drawn up on all important questions, instead of taking counsel as before with the great men of the realm. Imperceptibly, ministers were compelled by their understrappers to follow the royal example. They were so busy holding their own in the two Chambers or at Court, that they allowed themselves to be guided by the leading-string of the Report. If anything of consequence came up in the administration, the minister had but one answer to the most pressing question—"I have asked for a report." In this way the Report became for men in office, and in public business generally, pretty much what it is for the Chamber of Deputies and the Legislature, a sort of consultation, in the course of which the reasons for and against a measure are set forth with more or less impartiality. The minister, like the Chamber, after reading it, is very much where he was before.

Any kind of decision must need be made instantaneously. Whatever the preliminary process, the moment comes when you must make up your mind, and the bigger the array of arguments, the harder it is to come by a wise decision. The greatest deeds were done in France before reports were invented and decisions were made out of hand. The supreme rule for statesman, lawyer, or physician is the same—he must adopt a definite formula to suit each individual case. Ra-
bourdin, who thought within himself that "a minister is there to give decisions, to understand public business, and to dispatch it," beheld the report carrying all before it, from the

colonel to the marshal, from the commissary of police to the King, from the prefect to the cabinet minister, from the Chamber to the police courts.

Since 1808 everything had been on its trial; everything was weighed and pondered in conversation, books, and newspapers, and every discussion took literary shape. France was making dissertations instead of acting, and came to the brink of ruin in spite of these fine reports. A million of them would be drawn up in a year in those days! Wherefore bureaucracy got the upper hand. Portfolios, letter-files, waste-paper documents, and vouchers, without which France would be lost, and circulars which she could not do without, increased and multiplied and waxed imposing. Bureaucracy for its own ends fomented the ill-feeling between the receipts and expenditure, and calumniated the administration for the benefit of the administrator. Bureaucracy devised the Lilliputian threads which chain France to Parisian centralization; as if from 1500 to 1800 France had managed to do nothing without thirty thousand government clerks! And no sooner had the official fastened on the government as mistletoe takes root on a pear-tree, than he ceased to take any interest in his work, and for the following reasons:

The princes and the Chambers compelled the ministers to take their share of responsibility in the budget, by insisting that their names and the amounts of salaries paid by and to them should appear in detail therein. They were likewise obliged to keep a staff of clerks. Therefore, they decreased the salaries, while they increased the number of clerks, in the belief that a government is so much the stronger for the number of people in its employ. The exact converse of this is an axiom written large for all eyes to see. The amount of energy secured varies inversely with the number of agents. The Ministerialism of the Restoration made a mistake, as the event proved, in July, 1830. If a government is to be firmly rooted in the heart of the nation, it must be, not by attaching indi-

viduals, but by identifying itself with the interests of the country.

The official class was led to despise the government which curtailed their salaries and lowered their social position ; in retaliation they behaved as a courtesan behaves with an elderly adorer. They gave the crown an adequate return for their salaries. If the government and those in its employ had dared to feel each other's pulses ; if the big salaries had not stifled the voices of the little ones, the situation would have been recognized as equally intolerable on either side. An official gave his whole mind to making a living ; to draw a salary till he could reach a pension was his one object ; and to attain that great result, anything (in his opinion) was permissible. Such a state of things made a serf of a clerk ; it was a source of never-ending intrigues in the departments ; and, to make matters worse, a degenerate aristocracy tried to find pasture on the bourgeois common lands, using all its influence to get the best places for spendthrift sons ; and with these the poor civil servant was obliged to compete. A really able man is hardly likely to try to make his way in these tortuous mazes ; he will not cringe and wriggle and crawl through muddy by-paths, where the appearance of a man of brains creates a general scare. An ambitious man of genius may grow old in the effort to reach the triple tiara, but he will not follow in the footsteps of a Sixtus V., to be a chief clerk for his pains. If a man came into the department and stopped there, he was either indolent or incompetent, or excessively simple.

And so, by degrees, the administration was reduced to a dead-level of mediocrity, and an official hierarchy of petty minds became a standing obstruction in the way of national prosperity. A project for a canal, which would have developed the industries of a province, might lie in a pigeon-hole for seven years. Bureaucracy shirked every question, protracted delays, and perpetuated abuses the better to protract and perpetuate its own existence. Every one, even to

the minister in office, was kept in leading strings; and if any man of ability was rash enough to try to do without bureaucracy, or to turn the light upon its blunders, he was incontinently snuffed out. The list of pensions had just been published. Rabourdin discovered that a retired office messenger was drawing a larger sum from the Government than many a disabled colonel. The history of bureaucracy might be read at large in the pension list.

Rabourdin attributed the lurking demoralization in part to another evil, which has its roots in our modern manners; there is no real subordination in the service. A complete equality prevails from the head of the division to the lowest copying clerk; and one man is as good as another in the arena, though when he leaves it, he takes a high place outside. A poet, an artist, and an ordinary clerk are all alike employés; they make no distinctions among themselves. Education dispensed indiscriminately brings about the natural results. Does not the son of a minister's hall-porter decide the fate of a great man or some landed proprietor for whom his father used to open the door? The latest comer therefore can compete with the oldest. A wealthy supernumerary driving to Longchamp in his tilbury, with a pretty woman by his side, points out the head of his office to his companion with his whip: "There goes my chief!" he says, and his wheels splash the poor father of a family who must go on foot through the streets.

The Liberals call this sort of thing Progress; Rabourdin looked upon it as Anarchy in the core of the administration. Did he not see the results of it?—the restless intriguing as of women and eunuchs in the harem of an effete sultan, the pettiness of bigots, the underhand spite, the schoolboy tyranny, the feats on a level with the tricks of performing fleas, the slave's petty revenges taken on the minister himself, the toil and diplomacy from which an ambassador would shrink dismayed—and all undertaken to gain a bonus or an increase of salary? And meanwhile the men who really did the work,

the few whose devotion to their country stood out in strong contrast against the background of incompetence—these were the victims of parasites, these were forced out of the field by sordid trickery. As all high places were no longer in the gift of the crown, but went by interest in parliament, officials were certain, sooner or later, to become wheels in the machinery of government; they would be kept more or less abundantly greased, and that was all they cared about. This fatal conviction had already been brought home to many a good worker; it had suppressed many a memorial conscientiously undertaken from a sense of deep-seated evils; it was disheartening many a brave man and corroding the most vigorous honesty; the better sort were growing weary of injustice; drudgery left them listless, and they ceased to care.

A single one of Rothschild's clerks manages the whole of the English correspondence of the firm; a single man in a government office could undertake the whole of the correspondence with the prefectures. But whereas the first man is learning the rudiments of the art of getting on in the world, the latter is wasting his time, health, and life. Here, again, the ground rang hollow.

Of course, a nation is not threatened with extinction because a capable clerk retires and a third-rate man takes his place. Unluckily for nations, it would seem that no man is indispensable to their existence; but when all men have come down to a low level, the nation disappears. If any one wants an instructive example, he can go to Venice, Madrid, Amsterdam, Stockholm, and Rome: the places where men of immense power used to shine conspicuous are crumbling ruins, destroyed by pettiness which corroded its way till it reached high places that it could not fill. When the day of struggle came, everything collapsed at the first threat of attack.

But what a difficult problem was this! To rehabilitate the official at a time when the Liberal press was clamoring through every workshop that the nation was being robbed year by year

to pay official salaries, and every heading in the budget was represented as a horse-leech. "What was the good of paying a milliard of taxes every year?" cried the Liberals.

To M. Rabourdin's thinking, the government employé was to the national expenditure what the gambler is to the gambling saloon—whatever he takes away in his pocket he brings back again. A good salary, in his opinion, was a good investment. If you only pay a man a thousand francs a year, and ask for his whole time, do you not as good as organize theft and misery? A convict costs you very nearly as much, and does rather less work. But if the Government pays a man a salary of twelve thousand francs, and expects him to devote himself in return to the service, the contract would pay both sides, and the prospect ought to attract really capable men.

These reflections thereupon led Rabourdin to reconstitute the staff; to have fewer clerks, salaries trebled or doubled, and pensions suppressed. The Government should follow the example set by Napoleon, Louis XIV., Richelieu, and Ximenes, and employ young men; but the young men should grow old in the service. The higher posts and distinctions should be the rewards of their career. These were the capital points of a reform by which the government and the official staff would alike be benefited.

It is not easy to enter into details, to take heading by heading, and go through a scheme of reform which embraced the whole of the budget and descended into all the smallest ramifications of the administration, so that the whole might be brought into harmony. Perhaps, too, an indication of the principal reforms will be enough for those who know the administrative system—and for those who do not. But though the historian ventures upon dangerous ground when he gives an account of a scheme that has very much the look of armchair policy, he is none the less bound to give a rough idea of Rabourdin's projects for the sake of the light which a man's work

throws on his character. If all account of Rabourdin's labors were omitted, if this historian contented himself with the simple statement that the chief clerk in a government office possessed talent or audacity, you would scarcely feel prepared to take his word for it.

Rabourdin divided up the administration into three principal departments. He thought that if in former times there were heads capable of controlling the whole policy of the government at home and abroad, the France of to-day surely would not lack a Mazarin, a Suger, a Sully, a Choiseul, a Colbert, to direct far larger departments than those of the actual system. From a constitutional point of view, moreover, three ministers would work better together than seven, and the chances of going wrong in the choice are reduced; while, as a last consideration, the crown would be spared the jolts of those perpetual changes of ministry which make it impossible to adhere to any consistent course of foreign policy, or to carry through reforms at home. In Austria, where different nationalities present a problem of different interests to be reconciled and furthered by the crown, two statesmen carry the weight of public business without being overburdened. Was France poorer in political capacity than Germany? The sufficiently silly farce, entitled "*Constitutional Institutions*," has since been carried to an unreasonable extent; and the end of it, as everybody knows, has been a multiplication of ministerial portfolios to satisfy the widespread ambition of the bourgeoisie.

In the first place, it seemed natural to Rabourdin to reunite the Admiralty and the War Office. The navy, like the artillery, cavalry, infantry, and ordnance, was a spending department of the War Office. It was surely an anomaly to keep admirals and marshals on a separate footing, when all worked together for a common end—to wit, the defense of the country, the protection of national property, and wars of aggression. The Minister of the Interior was to preside over the Board of

Trade, the Police, and the Exchequer, the better to deserve his name ; while the Minister of Foreign Affairs controlled the administration of justice, the royal household, and everything in the interior which concerned arts, letters, or the graces. All patronage was to flow directly from the crown. The last-named minister, by virtue of his office, was also president of the Council of State. The work of each of these departments would require a staff of two hundred clerks at most at headquarters ; and Rabourdin proposed to house them all in one building, as in former days under the monarchy. Reckoning the salaries at an average of twelve thousand francs, the expense of this item in the budget would a little exceed seven millions, as against twenty millions on the actual system.

By reducing the number of the departments to three, Rabourdin suppressed whole divisions, and saved the enormous expense of their maintenance in Paris. He proved that an arrondissement ought to be worked by ten men, and a prefecture by a dozen at most ; on which computation the total number of government officials employed all over France (the army and courts of law excepted) would only amount to about five thousand—a number then exceeded by the staff in Paris alone. On this plan, however, mortgages became the province of the clerks of the various courts ; the staff of counsel for the crown (*ministère public*) in each court would undertake the registration of titles and the superintendence of the crown lands.

In this way Rabourdin concentrated similar functions. Mortgages, death-dues, and registration of titles remained within judicial spheres, while three supernumeraries in each court, and three in the Court-Royal, sufficed for the extra work.

By the consistent application of the same principle, Rabourdin proceeded to financial reform. He had amalgamated all Imperial taxes in one single tax, levied, not upon property, but upon commodities consumed. An assessed tax upon con-

sumption, in his opinion, was the only way of raising the national revenue in times of peace, the land-tax being reserved for times of war. Then, and then alone, the State might demand sacrifices of the owners of the soil for the defense of the soil; at other times it was a gross political blunder to vex the land with burdens beyond a certain limit; something should be left to fall back upon in great crises. On the same principle, loans were to be negotiated in time of peace, because they can then be issued at par, and not (as in hard times) at fifty per cent. discount. If war broke out, the land-tax remained as a resource.

“The invasion of 1814 and 1815 did what neither Monsieur Law nor Napoleon could do,” Rabourdin used to say to his friends; “it proved the necessity of a National Debt, and created it.”

Rabourdin held that the true principles of this wonderful mechanism were, unfortunately, not sufficiently understood at the time when he began his work, which is to say, in 1820. He proposed to lay a direct tax upon commodities consumed by the nation, and in this way to make a clean sweep of the whole apparatus for the collection of indirect taxes. He would do away with the vexatious barricades at town gates, securing at the same time a far larger return by simplifying the extremely costly system of collection in actual use. The receipts from the one Imperial tax should be regulated by a tariff comprising various articles of consumption, and the amount fixed in each case by assessment. To diminish the burdensomeness of a tax does not necessarily mean in matters financial that you diminish the tax itself; it is only more conveniently assessed. If you lighten the burden, business is transacted more freely, and while the individual pays less, the State gets more.

Tremendous as this reform may seem, it was carried out in a very simple fashion. Rabourdin took for a basis the assessments made by the Internal Revenue Department and the

licenses, as the fairest way of computing consumption. House rent in France is a remarkably accurate guide in the matter of the incomes of private individuals; and servants, horses, and carriages lend themselves to estimates for the Exchequer. Houses and their contents vary very little in yearly value, and do not easily disappear. Rabourdin pointed out a method of obtaining more veracious returns than those given by the system in use; then he took the total revenue derived by the Exchequer from (so-called) indirect taxation, divided it up, and assessed his single tax at so much per cent. on each individual taxpayer.

An Imperial tax is a preliminary charge paid on things or persons, and paid under more or less specious disguises. Such disguises were well enough for purposes of extortion; but surely they are absurd in these days when the classes which bear the burden of taxation know perfectly well why the money is wanted and how it is raised. As a matter of fact, the budget is not a strong-box, rather it is a watering-pot; as it is filled and the water distributed, the country prospers. Suppose, for instance, that there were six millions of taxpayers in easy circumstances—and Rabourdin was prepared to show that so many existed, if the rich taxpayers were included in the number—would it not be better, instead of putting a vexatious tax on wine by the gallon, to ask the consumer to pay a fixed sum per annum to the Government? Such “wine-dues” would not be more odious than the door and window tax, while they would bring in a hundred millions to the Exchequer. If other taxes on consumption were likewise assessed in proportion to the house rent, each individual would actually pay less; the Government would save in the costs of collection; and the consumer would benefit by an immense reduction in the prices of commodities which no longer would be subjected to endless vexatious regulations.

Rabourdin reserved a tax on vineyards, by way of a safeguard against over-production. And, the better to reach the

poor consumer, the charge for retailers' licenses was made in proportion to the population of the district. In these three ways the Exchequer would raise an enormous sum without heavy expense, and do away with a tax which was not only vexatious and burdensome, but also very expensive to collect. The burden would fall on the rich instead of tormenting the poor.

Take another instance: Suppose that the duty on salt took the form of one or two francs levied on each taxpayer; the modern *gabelle* would be abolished, the poor population and agriculture generally would feel the relief, the revenue would not be diminished, and no taxpayer would complain. Every taxpayer indeed, whether farmer or manufacturer, would be quick to recognize the improvement if the conditions of living grew easier in country places, and trade increased. And, in fact, the State would see an increase in the number of taxpayers in easy circumstances. The Exchequer would save enormously by sweeping away the extremely costly apparatus for the collection of indirect taxation (a government within a government); and both the Treasury and private individuals would benefit by the economy. Tobacco and gunpowder were to be put under a *régie*, beneath State superintendence. The *régie* system, developed not by Rabourdin, but by others, after the renewal of the legislation on tobacco, was so convincing that that law would have had no chance of passing the Chamber if the Government of the day had not driven them to it. But, then, it was a question of finance rather than of government.

The State should own no property; there should be no Crown domains, no woods and forests, no State mines, no State enterprises. The State as a landowner was an administrative anomaly, in Rabourdin's opinion. The State farms at a disadvantage, and receives no taxes; there is a double loss. The same anomaly reappeared in the commercial world in the shape of State manufactures. No government could work as

economically as private enterprise; the processes were slower; and, beside, the State took a certain proportion of raw materials off the market, and left so much the less for other manufacturers who pay taxes. Is it the duty of a government to manufacture or to encourage manufactures? to accumulate wealth, or to see instead that as many different kinds of wealth as possible are created?

On Rabourdin's system, officials were no longer to pay caution-money in cash; they should give security instead. And for this reason: the State either keeps the money in specie (withdrawing it needlessly from circulation), or puts it out to interest at a rate either higher or lower than the rate of interest paid to the official; making an ignoble profit out of its servants in the former case, or paying more than the market price for a loan in the latter, which is folly. Lastly, if at any time the State disposes of the mass of caution-money, it prepares the way, in certain contingencies, for a terrible bankruptcy.

The land-tax was not to be done away with altogether. Rabourdin allowed a very small amount to remain for the sake of keeping the machinery in working order in case of a war. But clearly produce would be free, and manufacturers, finding cheap raw materials, could compete with the foreigner without the insidious aid of protection.

The administration of the departments would be undertaken gratuitously by the well-to-do, a possible peerage being held out as an inducement. Magistrates, and their subalterns, and the learned professions, should receive honors as a recompense. The consideration in which government officials were held would be immensely increased by the importance of their posts and considerable salaries. Each would be thinking of his career, and France would no longer suffer from the pension cancer.

As the outcome of all this, Rabourdin estimated that the expenditure would be reduced to seven hundred millions,

while the receipts would amount, as before, to twelve hundred millions of francs. An annual surplus of five millions could be made to tell more effectually on the Debt than the paltry Sinking Fund, of which the fallacy had been clearly shown. By establishing a Sinking Fund, the State became a fundholder, as well as a landowner and manufacturer. Lastly, to carry out his project without undue friction, and to avoid a St. Bartholomew of employés, Rabourdin asked for twenty years.

These were the matured ideas of the man whose place had been given to the incompetent M. de la Billardière. A scheme so vast in appearance, yet so simple in the working, a project which swept away more than one great official staff, and suppressed many an equally useless little place, required continual calculation, accurate statistics, and the clearest proofs to substantiate it. For a long while Rabourdin had studied the budget in its double aspect, that of ways and means on the one side, and expenditure on the other. His wife did not know how many nights he gave to these thoughts.

And yet to have conceived the project and superimposed it on the dead body of the administration was as nothing; Rabourdin had still to find a minister capable of appreciating his reforms. His success clearly depended upon a quiet political outlook, and the times were still unsettled. He only considered that the Government was finally secure when three hundred deputies had the courage to form themselves into a solid systematic ministerialist majority. An administration established on that basis had been inaugurated since Rabourdin completed his scheme. The splendor of the time of peace, due to the Bourbons, eclipsed the military splendors of the brilliant days when France was one vast camp and victories abroad were followed by expenditure and display at home. After the Spanish campaign, the Government seemed as if it were surely entering upon a peaceful era in which good might be done; and, indeed, but three months before, a new reign

had begun unhampered by any obstacles, and the Liberals of the Left hailed Charles X. with as much enthusiasm as the party of the Right. It was enough to deceive the most clear-sighted. Consequently, the moment seemed propitious to Rabourdin; for if an administration took up so great a scheme of reform, and undertook to carry it through, it must of necessity insure its own continuance in office.

Never before had Rabourdin seemed more thoughtful and preoccupied as he walked to his office of a morning, and came back again at half-past four in the afternoon. And Mme. Rabourdin, on her side, despairing over her spoilt life, and weary of working in private for some few luxuries of dress, had never seemed so sourly discontent. Still she was attached to her husband; and the shameful intrigues by which the wives of other officials supplemented an inadequate salary were, in her opinion, unworthy of a woman so much above the ordinary level. For this reason she refused to have anything to do with Mme. Colleville, who was intimate with François Keller, and gave entertainments which eclipsed the parties in the Rue Duphot. Célestine took the impassive manner of the political thinker, the mental preoccupation of a hard worker, for the listless apathy of an official drudge whose spirit has been broken by routine; she thought her husband was submitting to the yoke of the most hateful poverty of all—the poverty of straitened means that just enables a man to live. She sighed to think that she should have married a man of so little energy. And so, about this time, she determined that she would make her husband's fortune for him; at all costs, she would launch him into a higher sphere, and she would hide all the springs of action from him. She set about this task with the originality of conception which distinguished her from other women; she prided herself on rising above their level, on totally disregarding their little prejudices; the barriers that society raises about her sex should not impede her. She would fight fools with

their own weapon, so she vowed in her frenzy; she would stake herself upon the issue if there was no other way. In short, she saw things from a height.

The moment was favorable. M. de la Billardière was hopelessly ill, and must die in a few days. If Rabourdin succeeded to the place, his talents (Célestine admitted his administrative ability) would be so well appreciated that the post of master of requests (promised before) would be given to him. Then he would be royal commissary, and bring forward the measures of the government in the Chamber. How she would help him then! She would be his secretary; if necessary, she would work all night. All this that she might drive a charming calèche in the Bois de Boulogne, and stand on a footing of equality with Mme. Delphine Nucingen, and raise her salon to a level with Mme. Colleville's, and be invited to high ministerial solemnities, and gain an appreciative audience. People should call her "*Madame Rabourdin à Something-or-other*" (she did not know yet where her estate should be), just as they said Mme. d'Espard, Mme. d'Aiglemont, or Mme. de Carigliano. In short, of all things she would put the odious-sounding name of Rabourdin out of sight.

These secret aspirations produced certain corresponding changes in the house. Mme. Rabourdin began by walking resolutely into debt. She engaged a manservant and put him into an inconspicuous livery, brown with red pipings. She renewed some of the furniture; papered her rooms afresh, decorated them with a constant succession of flowers, and strewed them with trinkets then in fashion; while she herself, who used to feel occasional conscientious qualms as to her expenses, no longer hesitated to dress in a manner worthy of her ambitions. The various tradesmen who supplied her with the munitions of war discounted her expectations. She gave a dinner-party regularly every Friday, the guests being expected to call to take a cup of tea on the following Wednesday. And her dinner guests were carefully chosen from among in-

fluential deputies and personages who might directly or indirectly promote her interests. People enjoyed those evenings very much ; or they professed to do so at any rate, and that is enough to attract guests in Paris. As for Rabourdin, he was so intently occupied with the conclusion of his great labors that he never noticed the outbreak of luxury in his house.

And so it came to pass that the husband and wife, all unknown to each other, were laying siege to the same place and working on parallel lines.

Now there flourished in those days a certain secretary-general, by name Clément Chardin des Lupeaulx, a personage of a kind that is sometimes brought much into evidence for a few years at a time by the tide of political events. Subsequently, if a storm arises, he and his like are swept away again ; you may find them stranded on the shore heaven knows how far away. But even so the hulk has a certain air of importance. The traveler wonders whether the wrecked vessel contained valuable merchandise, whether it played a part on some great occasion, took a share in a great sea-fight, or carried the velvet canopy of a throne, or the dead body of a king. At this precise juncture Clément des Lupeaulx (the Lupeaulx had absorbed the Chardin) had reached his apogee. In every life, however illustrious or obscure, in the careers of dumb animals as of secretaries-general, is there not a zenith and a nadir ?—a period when glossiness and sleekness reach a climax, and prosperity reaches its utmost radiance of glory ? In the nomenclature of the fabulist, des Lupeaulx belonged to the Bertrand genus, and his whole occupation consisted in discovering Ratons. As he happens to be one of the principal characters in this drama, he deserves to be described therein, and so much the more fully because the Revolution of July abolished his place ; and a secretary-general was an eminently useful institution for a constitutional minister.

It is the wont of the moralist to pour forth his indignation

upon transcendent abominations. Crimes for him are deeds that bring a man into the police-courts, social subtleties escape his analysis; the ingenuity which gains its ends with the Code for a weapon is either too high or too low, he has neither magnifying glass nor telescope; he must have good, strong-colored horrors, abundantly visible to the naked eye. And as he is always occupied, as one may say, with the carnivora, he has no attention to spare for reptiles; so, luckily for the satirists, the fine shades of a Chardin des Lupeaulx are left to them.

Selfish and vain; supple and proud; sensual and gluttonous; rapacious (for he had debts); discreet as a tomb which keeps its own secrets and allows nothing to issue forth to give the lie to the inscription meant to edify the passing traveler; undaunted and fearless in asking favors; amiable and witty in every sense of the latter word; tactful and ironical at need;—the secretary-general was one among the crowd of mediocrities which form the kernel of the political world. As politician, he was ready to leap gracefully over any stream, however broad; he was the kind of man that can do you more harm with a kiss than by a thrust with the elbow; he was a brazen-fronted skeptic that would go to mass at Saint-Thomas d'Aquin's if there was a fashionable congregation there. Des Lupeaulx's knowledge consisted in knowing what other people knew; he had chosen the profession of eavesdropper, and never did any of the confraternity pay a more strict attention to business. In his care not to arouse suspicion he was nauseatingly fulsome; subtle as a perfume, caressing as a woman in his manners.

Chardin des Lupeaulx had just completed his fortieth year. His youth had long been a source of affliction to him, for he felt instinctively that only as a deputy could he lay a sure foundation for his fortune. Does any one ask how he had made his way? In a very simple manner. Des Lupeaulx was a political Bonneau. He undertook commissions of the

delicate kind which can neither be given to a man that respects himself, nor yet to a man that has lost his self-respect. Errands of that sort are usually undertaken by serious persons of somewhat doubtful authority, whom it is easy to disavow should occasion require it. He was continually compromised, that was his calling; and whether he failed or succeeded, he got on equally fast.

The Restoration was a time of compromise; compromise between man and man, and between accomplished facts and coming events. In all public business, in short, there was a perpetual process of give and take. Des Lupeaulx grasped the idea that authority stood in need of a charwoman.

Let an old woman once get a footing in a house; let her learn how to make the beds and turn them down to satisfaction; let her know where the spoons are kept, where to sweep refuse, where to put the soiled linen, and where to find it; let her acquire the arts of pacifying duns and distinguishing the right kind of person to admit; let her once gain her footing, I repeat, and such a woman may have her faults, yet were she toothless, crooked, uncleanly in her person and habits—nay, were she addicted to the lottery and in the habit of appropriating thirty sous daily for her stakes therein—her employers are used to her ways, and do not care to part with her. They will hold counsel on the most delicate family affairs in her presence; she is on hand to remind them of resources and to scent out secrets; she brings the rouge-pot and the shawl at the psychological moment; she allows them to scold her, to bundle her downstairs; but, lo! next morning, at their awakening, she enters gaily with an excellent cup of broth. However great a statesman may be, he too needs a charwoman, a factotum with whom he can show himself weak and irresolute; somebody in whose presence he can carp at his destiny, put questions to himself, and answer them, and screw his courage up to the sticking-point. Does not the savage get sparks by rubbing a bit of hard wood against a

softer piece? Many a bright genius is kindled on the same principle. Napoleon found such a partner of his joys and cares in Berthier, Richelieu in Père Joseph; des Lupeaulx took up with anybody and everybody. Did a minister fall from power? Des Lupeaulx kept on good terms with him, acting as intermediary between the outgoing and incoming member of the government, soothing the former with a parting piece of flattery, and perfuming a first compliment for the latter. Des Lupeaulx, moreover, understood to admiration those little trifles of which a statesman has no leisure to think. He could recognize a necessity; he was apt in obedience. He enhanced the value of his knavery by being the first to laugh at it, the better to gain its full price; and he was always particularly careful to perform services of a kind which were not likely to be forgotten. When, for instance, people were obliged to cross the gulf fixed between the Empire and the Restoration; when everybody was looking about for a plank; while all the curs in the Imperial service were rushing over to the other side with voluble professions of devotion, des Lupeaulx had raised large sums of the money-lenders, and was crossing the frontier. He staked all to win all. He bought up the most pressing minor debts contracted in exile by his majesty Louis XVIII.; and being the first in the field, he contrived to discharge nearly three millions at twenty per cent., for he had the good luck to operate in the thick of the events of 1814 and 1815. The profits were swallowed down by Messieurs Gobseck, Werbrust, and Gignonnet, the croupiers of the enterprise; but des Lupeaulx had promised as much to them. He was not playing a stake, he was venturing the whole bank, knowing well that Louis XVIII. was not the man to forget such a whitewashing.

Des Lupeaulx received the appointment of master of requests; he was made a chevalier of St. Louis and an officer of the Legion of Honor. Having once gained a footing, the adroit climber cast about for a way of maintaining himself on

the ladder. He had gained an entrance into the stronghold, but generals are not wont to keep any useless mouths for long. And then it was that to his professions of useful help and go-between he added a third—he gave gratuitous advice on the internal diseases of power.

He discovered that the so-called great men of the Restoration were profoundly unequal to the occasion. Events were ruling them. He overawed mediocre politicians by going to them in the height of a crisis and selling them those watchwords which men of talent hear as they listen to the future. You are by no means to suppose that such watchwords originated with des Lupeaulx himself; if they had, he would have been a genius, whereas he was simply a clever man. Bertrand Clément des Lupeaulx went everywhere, collecting opinions, fathoming men's inner consciousness, and catching the sounds they gave forth. Like a genuine and indefatigable political bee, he gathered knowledge from all sources. He was a "Bayle's Dictionary" in flesh and blood, but he improved upon his famous prototype; he gathered all opinions, but he did not leave others to draw their own conclusions, and he had the instinct of the bluebottle fly; he dropped down straightway upon the most succulent morsels of meat in the kitchen.

For which reasons des Lupeaulx was supposed to be indispensable to statesmen. Indeed, the idea took so deep a root in people's minds that ambitious and successful men judged it expedient to compromise des Lupeaulx, lest he should rise too high, and indemnified him for his lack of importance in public by using their interest for him in private.

Nevertheless, as soon as this fisher of ideas felt that he was generally supported, he had insisted upon earnest-money. He drew his pay as a staff officer of the National Guard, in which he held a sinecure at the expense of the city of Paris; he was a government commissioner for the superintendence of a joint-stock company, and an inspector in the royal household. His name appeared twice beside in the civil list as a secretary-

general and master of requests. At this moment it was his ambition to be a commander of the Legion of Honor, a gentleman of the bedchamber, a count, and a deputy ; but for this last position he had not the necessary qualifications. A deputy in those days was bound to pay a thousand francs in taxes, and des Lupeaulx's miserable place in the country was scarcely worth five hundred francs a year. Where was he to find the money to build a country-house ; to surround it with respectable estates, and throw dust in the eyes of his constituents ?

At the opening of this Scene he had scarce anything to call his own save a round thirty thousand francs' worth of debts, to which nobody disputed his title. Des Lupeaulx dined out every day. For nine years he had been housed at the expense of the State, and the ministers' carriages were at his disposal. Marriage might set him afloat again, if he could bale out the waters that threatened to submerge him ; but a good match depended upon advancement, and advancement depended upon a seat in the Chamber of Deputies. Casting about for some way of breaking through this vicious circle, he saw but one expedient—to wit, some great service to be rendered to the government, or some profitable bit of jobbery. But conspiracies (alas !) were played out. The Bourbons, to all appearance, had triumphed over faction. And as for jobbery !—the Left benches, unluckily, were doing all that in them lay to make any government impossible in France ; for several years past their absurd discussions had thrown such a searching light upon the doings of the government that good bits of business were out of the question. The last had been done in Spain, and what a fuss they had made about it ! To crown all, des Lupeaulx had multiplied difficulties for himself. Believing in the ministers' friendship for him, he imprudently expressed his desire to be seated on the ministerial benches. The Ministry was not slow to perceive the origin of this desire. Des Lupeaulx meant to strengthen a precarious position, and

to be no longer dependent upon them. It was the revolt of the hound against the hunter. Wherefore, the Ministry gave him now a cut or two with the whip, and now a caress. They raised up rivals unto him. But des Lupeaulx behaved toward these as a clever courtesan treats new-comers in her profession: he spread snares, they fell into them, and he made them feel the consequences pretty promptly. The more he felt that his position was unsafe, the more he coveted a permanent berth; but clearly he must not show his hand. In one moment he might lose everything. A single stroke of the pen would clip away his colonel's epaulettes, his controller's place, his sinecure with the joint-stock company, and his two posts beside, with their advantages—six salaries in all, cunningly preserved in the teeth of the law against cumulative holdings!

Not infrequently des Lupeaulx would hold out a threat over his minister, as a mistress frightens her lover; he was "about to marry a rich widow," and then the minister would coax the dear des Lupeaulx. It was during one of these renewals of love that the secretary-general received a promise of the first vacancy at the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres. It was enough to keep a horse upon, he said. Clément Chardin des Lupeaulx flourished like a tree set in congenial soil. He found satisfaction for his vices and virtues, his fancies and defects.

Now for the burdens of his day. First of all, out of half a dozen invitations to select the best dinner. This being decided, he went the first thing in the morning to amuse the minister and his wife, and fondle and play with the children. Then he usually worked for an hour or two; which is to say, he spread himself out in a comfortable armchair to read the papers, dictate the gist of a letter, receive all comers in the minister's absence, lay down the rough outline of the day's routine, receive and give promises that meant nothing, and run over petitions with his eyeglass. To these he sometimes affixed his signature, which, being intrepited, meant: "Do

as you like about this ; I don't care." Everybody knew that if des Lupeaulx were really interested in a matter, he would interfere in person. Some confidential chat on delicate topics was vouchsafed to the upper clerks, and he listened to their gossip in return. Every now and again he went to the Tuileries to take orders ; then he waited till the minister came back from the Chamber to see if there was any new manœuvre to invent and superintend. Then this ministerial sybarite dressed and dined, and made the round of twelve or fifteen salons between eight in the evening and three in the morning. He talked with journalists at the opera, for with them he was on the best of terms. There had been a continual exchange of small services. He gave out his false news and swallowed down theirs ; he prevented them from attacking such and such a minister on such and such a point—it would give real pain, he said, to their wives or mistresses.

"Say that the proposed measure is no good, and prove it if you can ; but you must not say that Mariette danced badly. Put the worst construction, if you like, upon our love of our neighbor in petticoats, but do not expose the pranks we played in our salad days. Hang it all ! we have all cut our capers, and we never know what we may come to as times go. You that are spicing your paragraphs in the 'Constitutionnel' may be a minister yourself some of these days——"

And des Lupeaulx did the journalists a good turn at a pinch ; he withdrew obstacles put in the way of producing a piece ; presents or a good dinner were forthcoming at the right moment, and he would promise to facilitate the conclusion of a piece of business. He had a liking for literature and patronized the arts. He had autographs and splendid albums and sketches and pictures, *gratis*. And he did artists much service by refraining from doing harm, and supporting them on occasions when their vanity demanded a satisfaction which cost him little or nothing. Wherefore he was popular in the world of journalists, artists, and actors. Both he and

they, to begin with, were infected by the same vices and the same indolence ; and they cut jokes so merrily at other people's expense over their cups or between two opera dancers—how they should not have been friends? If des Lupeaulx had not been a secretary-general, he would have been a journalist ; for which reason des Lupeaulx never received so much as a scratch through those fifteen years, while epigram was battering the breach through which insurrection would enter.

The small fry of the department used to see him playing at ball in the garden with his lordship's children, and would rack their brains to discover what he did and the secret of his influence ; while the *talons rouges*,* the courtiers of men in office, looked upon les Lupeaulx as the most dangerous kind of Mephistopheles, and bowed the knee to him, and paid him back with usury the flatteries that he himself was wont to lavish on his betters. Indecipherable as a hieroglyph though he might be for small men, the secretary-general's uses were as plain as a proportion sum to those who had any interest in discovering them. A Prince of Wagram on a small scale to a ministerial Napoleon, he knew all the secrets of party politics ; it was his business to sift advice and ideas and make preliminary reports ; he also confirmed weak-kneed supporters ; he brought in propositions and carried them out and buried them ; he uttered the "Yes" or "No" which the minister was afraid to pronounce. He bore the brunt of the first explosion of despair or anger ; he laughed and mourned with his chief. A mysterious link in a chain that connected many peoples' interests with the Tuileries, he was discreet as the confessional ; sometimes he knew everything, sometimes he knew nothing ; sometimes he said for the minister what the minister could not say for himself.

With this Hephæstion, in short, the minister might dare to show himself as he was ; he could lay aside his wig and false teeth, state his scruples, put on dressing-gown and slippers,

* Lit.: Red heels.

unbosom himself of his sins, and lay bare the ministerial conscience.

Not that des Lupeaulx lay exactly on a bed of roses. It was his duty to flatter and advise, to give advice in the guise of flattery, and flattery in the form of advice. Politicians in his profession were apt to look yellow enough; and the constant habit of nodding to signify approval, or to appear to do so, gives a peculiar air to the head. Such men would approve indifferently all that was said before them. Their language bristled with "buts," "however," and "nevertheless," and formulas such as "for my own part" and "in your place," which pave the way to a contrary opinion; they were particularly fond, be it noted, of the expression "in your place."

In person, Clément des Lupeaulx might be described as the remains of a fine man: five feet four inches in height, not unconscionably fat, with a complexion warmed by good living, a jaded air, a powdered "Titus," small eyeglasses set in a slender frame. He was preëminently a blonde, as his hand indicated; it was a plump hand like an old woman's, a little too blunt perhaps, and short in the nails—a satrap's hand. His feet were not wanting in distinction.

After five o'clock in the afternoon des Lupeaulx always wore black-silk open-work stockings, low shoes, black trousers, a kerseymere vest, an unscented cambric handkerchief, a coat of royal blue, with engraved buttons, and a bunch of orders at his button-hole. In the morning he appeared in a short closely buttoned jacket (not inappropriate to an intriguer), and a pair of creaking boots hidden by gray trousers. In this costume his bearing suggested a crafty attorney rather than the demeanor of a minister. His eyes had grown glassy with the use of spectacles, till he looked uglier than he really was, if by accident he removed those aids to weak sight. Shrewd judges of human nature and straightforward men who only feel at ease when truth is spoken found des Lupeaulx intolerable. His gracious manners skimmed the surface of falsehood; his

friendly protestations, and the stale pretty speeches which always seemed fresh for imbeciles, were growing threadbare. Any clear-sighted man could see that this was a rotten plank on which it was most desirable not to set foot. And when the fair Célestine Rabourdin deigned to turn her thoughts to making her husband's fortune, she gauged Clément des Lupeaulx pretty accurately, and fell to studying him. Was there still a little sound fibre left? Would the thin lath bear if one crossed ever so lightly over it, from the office to the division, from eight thousand to twelve thousand francs a year? She was no ordinary woman. She fancied that she could hold a blackguard politician in play. And so it came to pass that M. des Lupeaulx was to some extent a cause of the extravagant expenditure of the Rabourdin household.

The Rue Duphot, built in the time of the Empire, is remarkable for a good many houses of elegant appearance, and, as a rule, their interiors are convenient. Mme. Rabourdin's flat was excellently arranged, an advantage which does much to raise the dignity of household life. From a pretty and sufficiently spacious antechamber, lighted from the courtyard, you entered the large drawing-room which looked upon the street. Rabourdin's room and his study lay at the farther end of this room to the right, and beyond at a right angle was the dining-room which lay to your left as you entered the antechamber. A door to the left of the great drawing-room gave admittance to Mme. Rabourdin's bedroom and dressing-room, and behind, at a right angle, was a little room in which her daughter slept. When Mme. Rabourdin was At Home, her bedroom and Rabourdin's cabinet were thrown open. The space enabled her to receive visitors without drawing down ridicule upon herself; her receptions were not like certain unfortunate attempts at evening parties, when the luxury is too evidently assumed for the occasion, and involves a sacrifice of daily habits.

The drawing-room had been newly hung with yellow silk

and brown ornaments. Mme. Rabourdin's room was decorated with real Eastern chintz, and the furniture was in the rococo style. Rabourdin's study inherited the discarded drawing-room hangings, which had been cleaned, and Leprince's fine pictures adorned the walls. The late auctioneer had picked up some enchanting Eastern carpets for trifling sums; his daughter now turned them to account in the dining-room, framing them in priceless old ebony. Wonderful Boule sideboards, also purchased by the late auctioneer, surrounded the walls, and in the midst stood a tortoise-shell clock-case inlaid with gleaming brass scroll-work; the first example of a square-shaped clock which reappeared to do honor to the seventeenth century. The air was fragrant with the scent of flowers; the rooms were tasteful and full of beautiful things; every little thing in them was a work of art in itself; everything was placed to advantage, and in appropriate surroundings. And Mme. Rabourdin herself, dressed with the simplicity and originality which artists can devise, looked as though all these pleasant things were a part of her life; she never spoke of them, she left the charm of her conversation to complete the effect produced by the whole. Thanks to her father, since rococo came into fashion, Célestine had acquired celebrity.

Des Lupeaulx was accustomed to all sorts of splendor, sham and real, but Mme. Rabourdin's house was a surprise to him. An illustration may explain the nature of the charm that worked upon this Parisian Asmodeus. Suppose that a traveler had seen all the best beauty of Italy, Brazil, and India, till he was weary; suppose that on his return to France his way brought him past some lovely little lake, the Lake of Orta, under Monte Rosa, for instance, with its island set in the midst of quiet waters—a spot coyly hidden and left to nature, a wild garden, a lonely but not solitary island with its shapely groves of trees and picturesquely placed statues. The shores all round about it are half-wild, half-cultivated; grandeur and

unrest encircle it; but within everything takes human proportions. Here in miniature is the world that our traveler has seen already; but that world has grown modest and pure; its influences soothe his soul; the delicate charm of the place affects him as music might; it awakens all kinds of associations and harmonious echoes. It is a hermitage, and yet it is life.

It had happened a few days previously that Mme. Firmiani had spoken to des Lupeaulx of Mme. Rabourdin. Mme. Firmiani, one of the most charming women of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, liked Mme. Rabourdin, and used to receive her at her house, and on this occasion she had asked des Lupeaulx simply for the purpose of saying: "Why do you not call on Mme. Rabourdin?" (indicating Célestine). "Her evening parties are delightful; and, what is more, her dinners are—better than mine." Des Lupeaulx accordingly allowed a promise to be exacted from him by the fair Mme. Rabourdin (who raised her eyes to his face for the first time as she spoke), and went to the Rue Duphot. Is there any need to say more? Women have but one stratagem, as Figaro cries; but it never fails.

Des Lupeaulx dined with this mere chief clerk, and registered a vow to go again. Thanks to the decorous and lady-like strategy of the charming woman whom Mme. Colleville dubbed "the Célimène of the Rue Duphot," he had dined there regularly every Friday for a month past, and went of his own accord for a cup of tea on Wednesdays. Only during the last few days, after much delicate and skillful trying of the ground, Mme. Rabourdin had come to the conclusion that she had found the safe and solid spot in the plank. She was sure now of success. The joy she felt in the depths of her soul can only be understood in households that know what it is to wait three or four years for promotion, and to plan out an increase of comfort when the fondly cherished hope shall be realized. What hardships that hope makes bearable! What

prayers are put up to the powers that be ! What visits paid to gain the desired end ! At last, thanks to her spirited policy, Mme. Rabourdin was to have an income of twenty thousand francs instead of eight. The hour had struck.

"And I shall have managed it very well," she told herself. "I have gone to some little expense, but people are not on the lookout for hidden merits in these days ; on the contrary, if a man puts himself in evidence by going into society, keeping up his connections and making new ones, he is sure to get on. After all, the ministers and their friends only take an interest in people whom they see, and Rabourdin knows nothing of the world. If I had not got hold of these three deputies, they might very likely have wanted La Billardiére's place ; but now that they come here, they would feel ashamed to try to take it. They will be our supporters, not our rivals. I have had to flirt a little ; it is lucky for me that there was no need to go further than the first stage with the sort of folly that amuses men."

But a contest, as yet unforeseen, was about to begin for the place ; and its actual commencement may be dated from a ministerial dinner, followed by an evening party of a kind which ministers regard as public. The minister's wife was standing by the fire, and des Lupeaulx was at her side. As he took his cup of coffee, it occurred to him to include Mme. Rabourdin among the seven or eight really remarkable women in Paris. He had done this before ; Mme. Rabourdin, like Corporal Trim's Montero cap, was always coming up in conversation.

"Don't say too much about her, my dear friend, or you will spoil it all," the minister's wife returned, half-laughingly.

No woman likes to listen to another woman's praises ; they one and all keep a word in reserve, so as to put a little vinegar to the panegyric.

"Poor La Billardiére won't last long," remarked his excellency; "Rabourdin is the next in succession, he is one of our cleverest men. Our predecessors did not behave well to him, although one of them owed his prefecture of police under the Empire to a certain personage who was paid to use his influence for Rabourdin. Frankly, my dear fellow, you are still young enough yet to be loved for your own sake——"

"If La Billardiére's place is Rabourdin's for a certainty, I may be believed if I hold up his wife as a remarkable woman," returned des Lupeaulx, the irony in his excellency's tones had not escaped him; "still, if Madame la Comtesse cares to judge for herself——"

"I can ask her to my next ball, that is it, is it not? Your remarkable woman would come when certain ladies will be here to quiz us; they will hear 'Madame Rabourdin' announced."

"But do not they announce Madame Firmiani at the house of the Minister of Foreign Affairs?"

"A born Cadignan!——" the newly made count broke in quickly, with a withering glance at his secretary-general. Neither his excellency nor his wife was noble. A good many persons thought that something important was going forward. Those who had come to ask favors kept to the other end of the room. When des Lupeaulx came out, the new-made countess turned to her husband with: "Des Lupeaulx must be in love, I think."

"Then it will be for the first time in his life," returned the minister, shrugging his shoulders, as who should say that des Lupeaulx was not taken up with such trifles.

Then the minister beheld a deputy of the Right Centre entering the room, and left his wife to coax over a faltering vote. But it so happened that the deputy was overwhelmed by an unforeseen disaster, and wanted to secure the minister's influence by coming to announce in strict confidence that he would be forced to send in his resignation in a few days' time. And

his excellency, warned in time, could get his batteries into play before the Opposition had a chance.

The minister (which is to say, des Lupeaulx) had included among the dinner guests a personage who is practically appointed for life in every government department. This individual, being not a little puzzled to know what to do with himself, and anxious to give himself a countenance, happened to stand planted on both feet with his legs close together, very much after the manner of an Egyptian terminal. He was waiting, near the hearth, for an opportunity of expressing his thanks to the secretary-general; indeed, the abrupt retreat made by that worthy took him by surprise just as he was about to formulate his little compliment. The functionary in question was, in fact, none other than the cashier of the department, the one employé who never shook in his shoes over a change of government. In those days the Chamber did not higgler over the budget as it is wont to do in the present degenerate times; it did not cut down the emoluments of office to effect what may be called "cheese-paring economies" in kitchen phraseology. Every minister on coming into office received a fixed sum for "expenses of removal." It costs as much, alas! to come in as to go out of office; and the installation entails expenses of every sort and description which need not be recorded here. The allowance for expenses used to consist of twenty-five pretty little thousand-franc notes.

When the ordinance appeared in the "*Moniteur*," while all officials, great and small, were grouped about their stoves or open hearths, as the case might be, revolving the questions: "What is this one going to do? Will he increase the number of clerks? Or will he dismiss two and take on three?—" while all this was going forward, I say, the placid cashier used to bring out twenty-five bills and pin them together, engraving a joyful expression meanwhile upon his beadle's countenance. This done, he skipped up the staircase to the residence, and was admitted to his excellency's pres-

ence the first thing in the morning; for servants are wont to confuse the notions of the power of money with the custodian thereof, the cash-box with its contents, the idea and its outward and visible manifestation. The cashier, therefore, always came upon the ministerial couple in that first blush of rapture when a statesman is in a benign humor, and a good fellow for the nonce.

In reply to the minister's inquiry: "What do you want?" the cashier produced his bits of paper, with a speech to the effect that he had hastened to bring his excellency the customary indemnity; he then explained the why and wherefore of the allowance to the astonished and delighted lady, who never failed to take some portion, and not infrequently took the whole. An indemnity for expenses of removal comes within the province of housekeeping. The cashier turned his compliment, slipping in a few phrases for the minister's benefit. "If his excellency vouchsafed to confirm him in his appointment, if he was satisfied with the purely mechanical service which, etc., etc." And as the man who brings twenty-five thousand francs is always a good public servant, the cashier never failed to receive the desired confirmation in a post whence he watched ministers come and go and come again for a quarter of a century. Then he would put himself at madame's disposal; he would bring the thirteen thousand francs every month at the convenient time, a little earlier or later as required, and thus, to use the ancient monastic expression, "he kept a vote in the chapter."

The *Sieur Saillard* had been a book-keeper at the Treasury while the Treasury kept books on a system of double-entry; but the plan was afterward given up, and they gave him a cashier's place by way of compensation. Book-keeping was his one strong point; he was little good at anything else. He was a burly, fat old gentleman, round as a figure 0, and simple in the extreme; he walked like an elephant at a measured pace to and from the *Place Royale*, where he lived

in a house of his own. He had a companion on his daily way, in the shape of his son-in-law, M. Isidore Baudoyer, the chief clerk in M. de la Billardiére's division, and in consequence Rabourdin's colleague. Baudoyer had married Saillard's only daughter, Elizabeth, and, naturally, took up his abode on a floor above his father-in-law. Nobody in the whole department doubted Saillard's stupidity, but nobody at the same time knew how far his stupidity would go; it was so dense that no one could insinuate a question into it; it had no hollow sounding spots: it absorbed everything, and gave nothing out. Bixiou (a clerk of whom mention will presently be made) had drawn a caricature of the cashier, a bewigged head surmounting an egg, with two tiny legs beneath, and the inscription—"Born to pay and receive money without making a mistake. A little less luck, and he would have been a porter at the Bank of France; a little more ambition, and the Government would have thanked him for his services."

To return to the minister. At this present moment he was looking fixedly at his cashier, much as he might have gazed at a hat-peg or at the ceiling, without imagining, that is to say, that the peg could hear what he said or understand a single word.

"I am so much the more anxious that everything should be arranged with the prefect with the utmost secrecy," his excellency was saying to the retiring deputy, "because des Lupeaulx has some idea of the kind. His bit of a place is somewhere in your part of the country, and we don't want him in the House."

"He has not the electoral qualifications, and he is not old enough," said the deputy.

"That is so, but you know how Casimir Périer decided with regard to the age limit. As to annual income, des Lupeaulx has something, though it doesn't amount to much; but the law made no provision for increase of landed property, and he might buy more. Committees give a good foothold

to a deputy of the Centre, and we could not openly oppose the good-will that the people would show to serve our dear friend."

"But where would he find the money to buy land?"

"How did Manuel become the possessor of a house in Paris?" retorted the minister.

The hat-peg meanwhile was listening, and listening very reluctantly. The two men had lowered their voices and spoke rapidly; but every sound, by some as yet unexplained law of acoustics, reached Saillard's ears. And what were the feelings of that worthy, do you suppose, while he listened to these political confidences? He experienced the most poignant alarm. There are guileless people who are reduced to despair if they appear to be listening to remarks that they are not intended to hear, if they intrude where they are not wanted, or seem to be inquisitive when they are really discreet; and Saillard was one of them. He glided over the carpet in such a sort that when the minister became aware of his existence, he was half-way across the room. Saillard was a fanatical official. He was incapable of the slightest indiscretion. If his excellency had but known that the cashier was in his counsel, he would have had no need to do more than say "Mum." Saillard saw that the rooms were beginning to fill with courtiers of office, went down to a coach hired by the hour for such costly occasions as this, and returned to the Place Royale.

While old Saillard was making his way across Paris, his beloved Elizabeth and his son-in-law were engaged in playing a virtuous game of boston with the Abbé Gaudron, their director, and a neighbor or two. Another visitor was also present. This was a certain Martin Falleix, a brass-founder of the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, whom Saillard had set up in business. Falleix, an honest Auvergnat, had come to Paris with his caldron on his back, and promptly found work with the Brézacs, a firm that bought old châteaux to pull down.

At the age of twenty-seven, Martin Falleix, being eager, like every one else, to get on in life, had the good fortune to be taken into partnership by M. Saillard. He was to be the active partner, he was to exploit a patent invention in brass-founding (gold medal awarded at the Exhibition in 1825).

Mme. Baudoyer, whose only daughter was just at the tail-end of her twelfth year (to quote old Saillard), had views of her own upon Falleix, a thick-set, swarthy young fellow, active, sharp-witted, and honest. She was forming him. According to her ideas, the education consisted in teaching the good Auvergnat to play boston, to hold his cards properly, to allow no one to see his hand; to shave, to wash his hands with coarse common soap before he came to them; to refrain from swearing, to speak French as they spoke it, to brush his hair erect instead of flattening it down, and to discard shoes for boots, and sackcloth shirts for calico. Only a week since, Elizabeth Baudoyer succeeded in persuading Falleix to give up two huge flat earrings like cask-hoops.

"You are going too far, Madame Baudoyer," said he, as she rejoiced over this sacrifice; "you are getting too much ascendancy over me. You make me brush my teeth (which loosens them); before long you will make me brush my nails and curl my hair, and that will never do. They don't like foppery in our line of business."

Elizabeth Baudoyer, *née* Saillard, was a type that always escapes the artist by the very fact that it is so commonplace. Yet, nevertheless, such figures ought to be sketched, for they represent the lower middle class in Paris, the rank just above the well-to-do artisan. Their merits are almost defects, and there is nothing lovable about their faults; but their way of life, humdrum and uninteresting though it is, does not lack a certain character of its own.

Elizabeth had a peculiar, puny, unwholesome look, which was not good to see. She was barely four feet high, and so thin that her waist measured scarcely half an ell. Her thin features

were crowded into the middle of her face; a certain vague resemblance to a weasel was the result. She was thirty years old and more, but she looked more like a girl of sixteen or seventeen. There was little brightness in the china-blue eyes under heavy eyelids and lashes that met the arch of eyebrows. Everything about Elizabeth was insignificant; she had pale flax-colored hair; the flat shiny surfaces of her forehead seemed to catch the light; her complexion was gray, almost livid in hue. The lower part of her face was triangular rather than oval in shape, but her features, generally speaking, were crooked, and the outlines irregular. Lastly, she had a sub-acid voice, with a pretty enough range of intonations. Elizabeth Baudoyer was the very type of the lower middle-class housewife who counsels her husband at night from her pillow; there is no merit in her virtues, no motive in her ambition, it is simply a development of domestic egoism. If Elizabeth had lived in the provinces, she would have tried to round out the property; as her husband happened to be in a Government office, she wanted advancement. The story of Elizabeth's childhood and girlhood will bring the whole woman before you; it is the history of the Saillard couple.

M. Saillard had married the daughter of a second-hand furniture dealer, one Bidault, who set up business under the arcades of the Great Market. M. and Mme. Saillard had a hard struggle in those early days; but now, after thirty-three years of married life and twenty-nine of work at the office, the fortune of "the Saillards" (as they were called by their acquaintances) consisted of sixty thousand francs in Falleix's business; the big house in the Place Royale, purchased for forty thousand francs in 1804; and thirty-six thousand livres paid down as their daughter's marriage-portion. About fifty thousand francs of their capital had come to them on the death of Widow Bidault, Mme. Saillard's mother. Saillard's post had brought in a steady income of four thousand five hundred francs; no one coveted his place for a long while.

because there were no prospects of promotion. This money had been saved up, sou by sou, by sordid frugality, and very carefully put out to interest. As a matter of fact, the Saillard's knew of but one way of investing money; they used to take their savings, five thousand francs at a time, to their notary, M. Sorbier, Cardot's predecessor, and he arranged to lend it on mortgages. They were always careful to take the first mortgage, with a further guarantee secured on the wife's property if the borrower were a married man.

At this point of their history their big house was worth a hundred thousand francs, and brought them in eight thousand. Falleix paid seven per cent. on his capital before reckoning up the profits, which were equally divided. Altogether, the Saillards possessed an income of seventeen thousand francs at the least. To have the cross and retire on a pension was old Saillard's one ambition.

Elizabeth's youth had been spent in continual drudgery in a family with just such laborious habits and narrow ideas. Great was the discussion before the purchase of a new hat for Saillard; the career of a coat was reckoned by years; umbrellas were carefully hung up from a brass ring.

No repairs had been made in the house since 1804. The Saillards' first-floor flat was precisely in the condition in which the previous owners left it; but the gilding had departed from the frames of the pier-glasses, and the painted friezes over the doors were almost invisible beneath the accumulated grime of years. The great spacious rooms, with carved marble chimney-pieces and ceilings worthy of Versailles, were filled with the furniture left by the Widow Bidault. This consisted of easy-chairs of walnut-wood, covered with tapestry, rosewood sets of drawers, old-fashioned stands with brass rims and cracked, white marble-tops; and a chaos of bargains, in short, picked up by the furniture-dealer in the Great Market. Among these was a superb Boule bureau, to which fashion had not yet restored its proper value. The pictures had been selected en-

tirely for their handsome frames; the chinaware was distinctly heterogeneous; a set of splendid Oriental china dessert plates, for instance, was eked out with porcelain from every possible factory; the silver was a collection of odd lots; the cut-glass old-fashioned; the table linen fine damask. They slept in a tomb-shaped bedstead with chintz curtains hung from a coronal.

Amid all these relics of the past, Mme. Saillard used to live in her low, modern mahogany armchair with her feet on a foot-warmer, every hole in the latter article of furniture charred and blackened. Her chair was drawn up to the grate, where a heap of dead ashes took the place of a fire. On the mantel there stood a clock-case, one or two old-fashioned bronze ornaments, and some flowered candle-sconces. These last were empty, however. Mme. Saillard had a *martinet* for her own use, a small, flat brass candlestick with a long handle; and the candles she used were long tallow dips that guttered as they burned. In Mme. Saillard's countenance, in spite of wrinkles, you could read willfulness, severity, and narrow-mindedness; together with a fair and square honesty, a pitiless creed, an undisguised stinginess, and the quiet of a clear conscience. You may see faces thus composed by nature among portraits of the wives of Flemish burgomasters; but these latter are clad in splendid velvets and precious stuffs. Mme. Saillard wore no such robes. She adhered to the old-fashioned garments known as *cottes* in Picardy and Touraines, and as *cotillons* over the rest of France—a petticoat gathered in thick overlying pleats at the back and sides. The upper part of her person was buttoned into a short jacket, another bit of old-time costume, like the butterfly caps and high-heeled shoes which she still continued to wear. She knitted stockings for herself and her husband and for an uncle as well. And, although she was fifty-seven years old and fairly entitled to live at ease after her laborious struggles with domestic economy, she used to knit, after the manner of countrywomen, as she talked or went

about the house, or strolled round the garden, or took a peep into the kitchen to see how things were going there.

Niggardliness, at first compelled by painful necessity, had become a habit with the Saillards. When old Saillard came home from the office he took off his coat and worked in his garden. It was a pretty garden divided off from the yard by an iron railing; he had reserved it and kept it in order himself. Elizabeth had gone marketing with her mother in the morning; and, indeed, the two women did all the work of the house. The mother could cook a duck with turnips to admiration; but old Saillard maintained that for serving up the remains of a leg of mutton with onions, Elizabeth had not her equal. "You could eat your uncle that way and never find it out."

As soon as Elizabeth could hold a needle, her mother made her mend her father's clothes and the house linen. The girl was always busy as a servant over a servant's work; she never went out alone. They lived but a few paces away from the Boulevard du Temple; consequently the Gaîté, the Ambigu-Comique, and Franconi's were close at hand, and the Porte Saint-Martin not very far away, yet Elizabeth had never been "to the play." When the fancy took her "to see what it was like," M. Baudoyer, by way of doing things handsomely, took her to the opera, so that she might see the finest play of all (M. Gaudron having, of course, given permission). They were giving "*Le Laboureur Chinois*" at that time. Elizabeth thought "the play" as dull as ditch-water. She did not want to go again. On Sundays, after she had gone four times to and fro between the Place Royale and the Church of St. Paul (for her mother saw that she was punctual in the practice of religious duties and precepts), her father and mother took her to the Café Turc, where they seated themselves on chairs placed between a barrier and the wall. The Café Turc at that time was the resort of all the beauty and fashion of the Marais, the Faubourg Saint-Antoine, and adjacent neighborhoods; the

Saillards always went early to secure their favorite place, and then amused themselves by watching the passers-by.

Elizabeth had never worn anything but print gowns in summer, and merino in winter. She made her own dresses. Her mother only allowed her twenty francs a month; but her father was very fond of her, and tempered this rigor with occasional presents. Of "profane literature," as the Abbé Gaudron (curate of St. Paul's and the family oracle) was pleased to qualify it, Elizabeth knew nothing whatsoever. The system had borne its fruits. Compelled to find an outlet for her feelings in some passion, Elizabeth grew greedy of gain; not that she was lacking in intelligence or perspicacity, but ignorance and her creed had shut her in with a circle of brass. She had nothing on which to exercise her faculties, save the most trivial affairs of daily life; and as she had few things to think about, the whole force of her nature was brought to bear on the matter in hand. Her natural intelligence, being shackled by her religious opinions, could only exert itself within the limits imposed by casuistry, and casuistry becomes a very storehouse of subtleties from which self-interest selects shifts and evasions. Elizabeth was quite capable of asking her neighbor to do evil that she herself might reap the full benefit thereof; resembling in this respect various saintly personages in whom religion has not altogether extinguished ambition—with these, indeed, she had other points in common; she was relentless in pursuit of her end, underhand in her measures. When offended, she watched her antagonists with feline patience till she had accomplished a complete and cold-blooded revenge to be put down to the account of Providence.

Until the time of Elizabeth's marriage, the Saillards saw no visitors except the Abbé Gaudron, the Auvergnat priest, nominated to the curacy of St. Paul's since the reëstablishment of religious worship. This churchman had been friendly with the late Mme. Bidault. Mme. Saillard's paternal uncle

was also an occasional visitor. He had been a paper merchant, but he had retired in the year II. of the Republic, at the age of sixty-nine. He never came except on Sundays, because no business could be done on that day.

As for Bidault's personal appearance, there was not much room in the little old man's olive-hued visage for anything but a red bibulous nose and two little vulture-like slits of eyes. His grizzled locks were allowed to hang loose under the brim of his cocked hat. The tabs of his knee-breeches projected grotesquely beyond the buckles. He wore cotton stockings knitted by his niece (*la petite Saillard* he used to call her), thick shoes with silver buckles, and a greatcoat of many colors. Altogether he looked very much like the sexton-beadle-bellringer-gravedigger-chanter of some village church; a sort of person whom you might take for some freak of the caricaturist, until you met him in real life. Even at this day he used to come on foot to dine with them, and walk back afterward to the Rue Grenétat, where he lived on a fourth floor. Bidault was a bill-discounter. The Quartier Saint-Martin, the scene of his professional activity, had nicknamed him Gigonnet, from his peculiar jerky, feverish manner of picking his way in the streets. M. Bidault went into the bill-discounting line in the year II. of the Republic with a Dutchman, the *Sieur Werbrust*, a crony of Gobseck's, for his partner.

These, it has been said, were at one time the Saillards' only visitors; but afterward, old Saillard struck up an acquaintance with M. and Mme. Transon in the church-warden's pew at St. Paul's. The Transons, wholesale earthenware dealers in the Rue de Lesdignières, took an interest in Elizabeth, and it was with a view to finding a husband for her that they introduced young Isidore Baudoyer to the Saillards. The good understanding between M. and Mme. Baudoyer and the Saillard family was confirmed by Gigonnet's approbation. He had employed Mme. Baudoyer's brother, the *Sieur Mitral*, as his bailiff for many years; and about this time Mitral was

thinking of retiring to a pretty house at Ile-Adam. M. and Mme. Baudoyer, Isidore's father and mother, respectable leather-dressers in the Rue Censier, had put by a little money year by year in a jog-trot business. When they had married their only son and made over to him fifty thousand francs, they also thought of going to live in the country; it was they, indeed, who had fixed upon Ile-Adam, and attracted Mitral to that spot; but they still came frequently to Paris, where they had kept a *pied-à-terre** in the house in the Rue Censier which Isidore received on his marriage. The Baudoyers had an income of a thousand crowns after providing for their son.

M. Mitral, owner of a sinister-looking wig, and a visage the color of Seine water, illuminated by eyes of the hue of Spanish snuff, was as cool as a well-rope; he was a secretive, mouse-like creature; no one knew about his money; but he probably did in his corner as Gigonnet did in the Quartier Saint-Martin.

But if the family circle grew wider, their ideas and habits underwent no corresponding change. They kept all the family festivals; birthdays and wedding-days; all the saints' days of father and mother, son-in-law, daughter, and granddaughter; Easter, Christmas, New Year's Day, and Twelfth Night. And as these occasions always demanded a great sweeping and general cleaning of the house, they might be said to combine practical utility with the joys of domestic life. Then out came the presents; useful gifts produced with much pomp and circumstance and accompaniment of bouquets; a pair of silk stockings or a velvet skull-cap for Saillard; gold earrings or plate for Elizabeth or her husband (for whom they were making up a complete service by degrees), or a new silk petticoat for Mme. Saillard, who kept the stuff laid by in the piece. And before the presents were given, the recipient was always made to sit in an armchair, while the rest bade him—

“Guess what we are going to give you!”

* A temporary domicile.

Finally, they sat down to a grand dinner, which lasted for five hours. M. Gaudron* was invited, and Falleix and Rabourdin and M. Gothard (formerly M. Baudoyer's deputy), and M. Bataille, captain of the company in which Baudoyer and his father-in-law were enrolled. M. Cardot had a standing invitation, but, like Rabourdin, he only appeared one time in six. They used to sing over the dessert, and embrace each other with enthusiasm amid wishes for all possible good luck; and then the presents were on view, and all the guests must give their opinion of them. On the day of the velvet skull-cap, Saillard wore the article in question on his head during the dessert, to the general satisfaction. In the evening more acquaintances came in, and a dance followed. A single violin did duty for a band for a long while; but for the last six years, M. Godard, a great amateur of the flute, had contributed the shrill sounds of a piccolo to the festivity. The cook, Mme. Baudoyer's general servant, and old Catherine, Mme. Saillard's maid, stood looking on in the doorway with the porter and his wife; and a crown of three livres was given to them to buy wine and coffee.

The whole family circle regarded Baudoyer and Saillard as men of transcendent ability; they were in the employ of the Government; they had made their way by sheer merit; they worked in concert with the minister, so it was said; they owed their success entirely to their talents. Baudoyer was generally considered to be the more capable man of the two, because his work as chief clerk was allowed to be more arduous and complex than book-keeping. And beside, Isidore had had the genius to study, although he was the son of a leather-dresser in the Rue Censier; he had the audacity also to give up his father's business to enter a Government office, and had reached a high position. As he was a man of few words, he was supposed to be a deep thinker; "he would perhaps represent the eighth arrondissement some day," said the Tran-

* See "Honorine" and "A Start in Life."

sons. And as often as Gigonnet heard this kind of talk, he would purse up lips that were sufficiently pinched already, and glance at his grand-niece, Elizabeth.

As to physique, Isidore was a big heavy man of seven-and-thirty ; he perspired easily ; his head suggested hydrocephalus. It was an enormous head covered with closely cropped chestnut hair, and joined to the neck by a thick fleshy roll that filled up his coat collar. He had the arms of a Hercules, the hands of a Domitian, and a waist girth which sober living kept "within the limits of the majestic," to quote Brillat-Savarin. In face he was very much like the Emperor Alexander. You recognized the Tartar type in the little eyes, in a nose depressed in the middle and raised at the tip, in the chilly lips and short chin. His forehead was narrow and low. Isidore was of lymphatic temperament, but time had no whit abated an excessive conjugal attachment. In spite of his likeness to the handsome Russian Emperor and the terrific Domitian, Isidore Baudoyer was nothing but a slave of red-tape ; he was not very fit for the post of chief clerk, but he was thoroughly accustomed to the routine work, and his vacuity lay beneath such a thick covering that no scalpel as yet had probed it. He had displayed the patience and sagacity of the ox during those days of hard study ; and this fact, together with his square head, had deceived his relatives. They took him for a man of extraordinary abilities.

At the office he was punctilious, pedantic, pompous, and fussy ; a perfect terror to his clerks. He was always making observations for their benefit, always insisting upon commas and full stops, always a stickler for rules and regulations, and so terribly punctual that not one of the clerks failed to be in his place before he came in.

Baudoyer used to wear a coat of cornflower-blue with yellow buttons, a buff waistcoat, gray trousers, and a colored stock. He had big feet, and his boots fitted him badly. His watch-chain was adorned with a huge bunch of seals and trinkets,

among which he still retained the "American seeds" which used to be the fashion in the year VII.; and this in 1824!

The restraints of religion and rigid habits of life were forces that bound this family together; they had, moreover, one common aim to unite them—the thought of making money was the compass which guided their course. Elizabeth Baudoyer was obliged to commune with herself for lack of any one to comprehend her ideas; for she felt that she was not among equals who could understand them. Facts had compelled her to form her own conclusions of her husband, but as a woman of rigid principle she did her best to keep up M. Baudoyer's reputation; she showed profound respect for him, honoring in him the father of her child and her husband; the "temporal power," in short, as the Abbé Gaudron put it. For which reason she would have thought it a deadly sin to allow a stranger to read her real opinion of her vapid mate in any glance, or gesture, or word. She even professed a passive obedience to his will in all things. Rumors of the outer world reached her ears, she noted them and made her own comparisons; and so sound was her judgment of men and affairs, that she became an oracle in private for the two functionaries. Indeed, at the time when this history begins, they had unconsciously reached the point of doing nothing without consulting her.

"She is a sharp one, is Elizabeth!" old Saillard used to say ingenuously. But Baudoyer was too much of a fool not to be puffed up by his ill-founded reputation in the Quartier Saint-Antoine. He would not allow that his wife was clever, while he turned her cleverness to account. Elizabeth felt convinced that her Uncle Bidault, *alias* Gigonnet, must be a rich man, a capitalist with an enormous turnover. By the light of self-interest, she read M. Baudoyer better than the minister read him. She saw that she was mated with a fool; she shrewdly suspected that life might have been something very different for her; but she preferred to leave that might-

have-been unexplored. All the gentle affections of Elizabeth's nature found satisfaction in her daughter; she spared her little girl the drudgery that she had known; she loved her child, and thought that this was all that could be expected of her. It was for that daughter's sake that she had persuaded her father to take the extraordinary step of going into partnership with Falleix. Falleix had been introduced to the family by old Bidault, who lent him money on pledges. But Falleix found his old fellow-countryman too dear; he complained with much candor before the Saillards that Gigonnet was asking eighteen per cent. of an Auvergnat. Old Mme. Saillard went so far as to reproach her relative.

"It is just because he is an Auvergnat that I only ask eighteen per cent.!" retorted Gigonnet. It was about that time that Falleix, aged twenty-eight, had hit upon a new invention. It seemed to Saillard, to whom he explained it, that the young man "talked straight" (to use an expression from Saillard's dictionary), and that there was a fortune to be made out of his idea. Elizabeth at once conceived the notion of keeping Falleix to "simmer" for her daughter, and forming her son-in-law herself. She was looking seven years ahead. Martin Falleix's respect for Mme. Baudoyer knew no bounds; he recognized her intellectual superiority. If he had made millions, he would still have been devoted to the house, where he was made one of the family circle. Elizabeth's little girl had been taught already to fill his glass prettily and to take his hat when he came.

When M. Saillard came home after the minister's dinner-party, the game of boston was in full swing. Elizabeth was advising Falleix; old Mme. Saillard, knitting in the fireside corner, was looking over the curate's hand; and M. Baudoyer, impassive as a milestone, was exerting his intelligence to discover where the cards were. Mitral sat opposite. He had come up from Ile-Adam for Christmas. Nobody moved when

Saillard came in. For several minutes he walked up and down the room, his broad countenance puckered by unwonted mental exercise.

"It is always the way when he dines with the minister; luckily, it only happens twice a year or they would just kill him outright," remarked Mme. Saillard. "Saillard was not made to be in the government——" Aloud she added, "Saillard, I say, I hope you are not going to keep your best clothes on, your silk breeches and Elbeuf cloth coat? Just go and take your things off; don't wear them out here for nothing; *ma mère*."

"There is something the matter with your father," Baudoyer remarked to his wife, when the cashier had gone to change his clothes in his fireless room.

"Perhaps Monsieur de la Billardière is dead," Elizabeth returned simply; "he is anxious that you should have the place, and that worries him."

"If I can be of service to you in any way, command me," said the curate of Saint Paul's, with a bow; "I have the honor to be known to Madame la Dauphine. In our times all offices should be filled by devoted subjects and men of stanch religious principle."

"Oh come!" said Falleix; "do men of merit want patronage if they are to get on in your line? I did the right thing when I turned brass-founder; custom comes to find you out if you make a good article."

"The Government, sir, is the Government," interrupted Baudoyer; "never attack it here."

"You are talking like the 'Constitutionnel,' in fact," said the curate.

"Just the sort of thing the 'Constitutionnel' always says," assented Baudoyer, who never saw the paper.

The cashier fully believed that his son-in-law was as much Rabourdin's superior in intellect "as God was above St. Crispin" (to use his own expression); still, the good soul's desire

for the step was a guileless wish. He wanted success ; he wanted it as all employes want their step, with a vehement, intense, unreflecting, brutal desire to get on ; but, at the same time, he must have it, as he wished to have the cross of the Legion of Honor, to wit, entirely through his own merits, and with a clear conscience. To his way of thinking, if a man had sat for twenty-five years behind a grating in a public office, he might be said to have given his life for his country, and had fairly earned the cross. He could think of no way of serving the interests of his son-in-law, save by putting in a word for him with the minister's wife when he took her the monthly stipend.

“ Well, Saillard, you look as if you had lost all your relatives ! Speak out, my boy ; pray tell us something,” cried Mme. Saillard when he came in again.

Saillard turned on his heel, with a sign to his daughter, intimating that politics were forbidden while visitors were present.

When M. Mitral and the curate had taken their departure, Saillard pushed back the table, and sat down in his arm-chair. He had a way of seating himself which meant that a piece of office gossip was about to be communicated ; a sequence of movements as unmistakable as the three raps on the stage at the Comédie-Française. First of all, he pledged his wife and daughter and son-in-law to the most profound secrecy (for however mild the gossip might be, their places, so he was wont to say, depended upon their discretion) ; then he brought out his incomprehensible riddle. How a deputy was about to resign ; how the secretary-general, very reasonably, wanted to be nominated to succeed him ; how the minister was privately thwarting the wish of one of his firmest supporters and most zealous servants ; and lastly, how the age limit and pecuniary qualifications had been discussed. Then came an avalanche of conjectures, washed away by a torrent of arguments on the part of the two officials, who kept up an exchange of ponder-

ous banalities. As for Elizabeth, she asked but three questions.

"If Monsieur des Lupeaulx is for us, can he carry Baudoyer's nomination?"

"*Quien!* begad, he could!" cried the cashier.

Elizabeth pondered this. "In 1814, Uncle Bidault and his friend Gobseck obliged him," she thought. Aloud she asked: "Is he still in debt?"

"Yes-s-s," said the cashier, with a doleful prolongation of the final sibilant. "They tried to attach his salary, but they were stopped by an order from headquarters, an injunction at sight."

"Then, where is his estate of the Lupeaulx?"

"*Quien!* begad! Your grandfather and Great-uncle Bidault came from the place, so did Falleix; it is not far from the arrondissement of this deputy that is coming off guard——"

When her colossus of a husband was in bed, Elizabeth bent over him, and though he had sneered at her questions for "crotchets," she said—

"Dear, perhaps you are going to have Monsieur de la Billardière's place."

"There you are again with your fancies!" cried Baudoyer. "Just leave Monsieur Gaudron to speak to the Dauphiness, and don't meddle with the office."

At eleven o'clock, just as all was quiet in the Place Royale, M. des Lupeaulx left the opera to go to the Rue Duphot. It chanced to be one of Mme. Rabourdin's most brilliant Wednesdays. A good many frequenters of her house had come in after the theatre to swell the groups already assembled in her rooms, and many celebrities were there: Canalis the poet, the painter Schinner, Dr. Bianchon, Lucien de Rubempré, Octave de Camps, the Comte de Granville, the Vicomte de Fontaine, du Bruel, writer of vaudevilles, Andoche Finot, the journalist, Derville, one of the longest-headed lawyers of the day; the

Comte du Châtelet and du Tillet, the banker, were all present, with several young men of fashion like Paul de Manerville and the young Vicomte de Portenduère.

Célestine was dispensing tea when the secretary-general came in. Her dress suited her well that evening. She wore a perfectly plain black velvet gown and a black gauze scarf; her hair was carefully smoothed beneath a high coronet of plaits, ringlets in the English fashion fell on each side of her face. Her chief distinction was an artist's Italian negligé, the ease with which she understood everything, and her gracious way of welcoming her friends' least wishes. Nature had given her a slender figure, so that she could turn swiftly at the first questioning word; her eyes were Oriental in shape, and obliquely set in Chinese fashion, so that they could glance sideward. Her soft, insinuating voice was so well under control that she could throw a caressing charm into every word, even her most spontaneous utterances; her feet were such as you only see in portraits, for in this one respect painters may flatter their sitters without sinning against the laws of anatomy. Like most brunettes, she looked a little sallow by daylight, but at night her complexion was dazzling, setting off her dark eyes and hair. Lastly, the firm, slender outlines of her form put an artist in mind of the Venus of the Middle Ages discovered by Jean Goujon,* the great sculptor favored by Diane de Poitiers.

Des Lupeaulx stopped in the doorway, and leaned his shoulder against the frame. He was accustomed to spy out men's ideas; he could not refuse himself the pleasure of spying a woman's feelings; for Célestine interested him far more than any woman had done before. And des Lupeaulx had reached an age when men claim much from women. The first white hairs are the signal for the last passions; and these are the most tumultuous of all, for they are stimulated by the last heat of youth and the sense of exhaustion. The fortieth

* A protestant, slain in Massacre of St. Bartholomew, 1572.

year is the age for follies, the age when a man desires to be loved for his own sake. To love at forty is no longer sufficient in itself, as it used to be when he was young, and could be happy in falling in love at random in Cherubino's fashion. At forty nothing less than all will satisfy a man, and he is afraid lest he should obtain nothing; whereas, at five-and-twenty, he has so much that it is not worth while to exert his will. There is so much strength to spare at five-and-twenty that it may be squandered with impunity; but at forty a man takes abuse of strength for vigor. The thoughts that filled des Lupeaulx's mind at this moment were surely melancholy ones, for the elderly beau's countenance had visibly lengthened; the agreeable smile which lent expression to his face, and did duty as a mask, had ceased to contract his features; the real man was visible; it was not a pleasant sight. Rabourdin noticed it.

"What has come to him?" he wondered. "Is he in disgrace?" But the secretary-general was merely reflecting that he had been dropped once before somewhat too promptly by pretty Mme. Colleville, whose intentions had been precisely the same as Célestine's own. Rabourdin also saw that the would-be statesman's eyes were fixed upon his wife; and he made a note of their expression in his memory. Rabourdin was too clear-sighted an observer not to see through des Lupeaulx; indeed, he felt the most thorough contempt for the secretary-general; but if a man is much engrossed by some pursuit, his feelings are less apt to rise to the surface, and mental absorption in the work that he loves is equivalent to the cleverest dissimulation of his attitude of mind. For this reason, Rabourdin's opinions were like a sealed book to des Lupeaulx. The chief clerk was displeased by the upstart politician's presence in his house; but he had not cared to cross Célestine's will. He happened to be chatting confidentially at the moment with a supernumerary, a young clerk destined to play a part in the intrigue set on foot by La Billardiére's

approaching death, so that it was but a wandering attention that he gave to Célestine and des Lupeaulx.

Some account of the supernumerary ought, perhaps, to be given here for the benefit of our nephews, and, at the same time, for the edification of foreign readers.

The supernumerary is to the administration what the chorister boy is to the church ; what the child of the company is to the regiment or the " rat " to the theatre—an ingenuous, innocent being, a creature blinded by illusions. How far should we go without illusions? On the strength of illusions we struggle with the difficulties of art while we scarce keep the wolf from the door, we digest the rudiments of the sciences with faith drawn from the same source. Illusions mean unbounded faith, and the supernumerary has faith in the administration. He does not take it for the unfeeling, cold-blooded, hard-hearted system that it is.

Of supernumeraries, there are but two kinds—the well-to-do and the poor. The poor supernumerary is rich in hope, and needs a berth ; the well-to-do supernumerary is poor in spirit, and has need of nothing. No well-to-do family is so simple as to put a man of brains into the administration. The well-to-do supernumerary is usually committed to the care of a senior clerk, or placed under the eye of a director-general, to undergo his initiation into the " pure comedy " of the civil service, as it would be styled by that profound philosopher Bilboquet. The horrors of probation are mitigated for him until he receives a definite appointment. Government offices are never afraid of the well-to-do supernumerary. The clerks all know that he is not at all dangerous ; he aims at nothing short of the highest places in the service.

At this time many families were asking : " What shall we do with our boys? " There were no chances of getting on in the army. Special careers, such as the navy, the mines, civil and military engineering, and professorships, are either hedged about with regulations or closed by competition ; whereas the

rotatory movement which metamorphoses clerks in a government office into prefects, sub-prefects, or receivers and controllers of taxes and the like (in much the same way as the little figures revolve in a magic-lantern), this movement, to repeat, is subject to no rules, and there are no terms to keep. Through this hole in the administrative system, therefore, behold the well-to-do supernumeraries emerge; these are young men who drive gigs about town, and wear good clothes and mustaches, and behave, one and all of them, as insolently as any self-made upstart. The well-to-do supernumerary was almost invariably a nephew or a cousin or a relative of some minister, or civil servant, or of a very influential peer. Journalists used to be pretty hard upon him; not so the established clerks; they aided and abetted the young gentleman, and made interest with him.

But the poor supernumerary (the only genuine kind) is, in nearly every case, a widow's son. His father before him probably was a clerk in a government office; his mother lives on a meagre pension, and starves herself to support her boy till he can get a permanent post as copying clerk; she dies while he is within sight of that marshal's bâton of the profession—the post of draughting clerk, with a prospect of drawing up reports and formulating orders for the term of his natural life, or even a problematical chance of becoming a senior clerk. This kind of supernumerary always lives in some neighborhood where rents are low, and leaves it an early hour. For him the state of the weather is the real Eastern Question. He must walk the whole way to the office, and keep his boots clean, and take care of his clothes; he must make allowance for the time that he is like to lose if a heavy shower forces him to take shelter. The supernumerary has plenty to think about! Pavements in the streets and flagstones along the quays and boulevards were boons indeed for him. If any strange chance should bring you out into the streets of Paris between half-past seven and eight o'clock of a

a winter morning, when there is a sharp frost, or the weather is generally unpleasant ; and if, furthermore, you happen to see a pallid, timorous youth walking along without a cigar in his mouth—look at his pocket ; you are pretty sure to discover the outlines of the roll which his mother gave him when he left home, so that he might hold out, without damage to his internal economy, through the nine long hours that separate breakfast from dinner. The period of unsophisticated innocence is, however, but short. By the light of a very little knowledge of life in Paris a lad soon acquires a notion of the awful distance between a supernumerary and a copying clerk ; a distance which neither Archimedes, nor Newton, nor Pascal, nor Leibnitz, nor Kepler, nor Laplace, nor any other mathematician can compute. It is the difference between zero and the unit, between a problematical bonus and a regularly paid salary. The supernumerary accordingly is pretty quick to see the impossibilities of the career ; he hears the talk of the clerks ; they explain to him how So-and-so was promoted over their heads. By and by he discovers the intrigues of government offices ; he finds out how his superiors were promoted, and the extraordinary circumstances that led to their success. One, for instance, married a young lady with a past ; another took to wife the natural daughter of a minister ; yet another took a heavy responsibility upon his shoulders ; while a fourth, an extremely able man, imperiled his health with working like a galley-slave ; but this last employé had the perseverance of a mole, and not every man feels himself capable of performing such feats. Everything is known in the office. Sometimes an incompetent man has a wife with plenty of brains ; she brought him thus far ; it was she who secured his nomination as a deputy ; and though he has no capacity for work, he can intrigue in a small way in the Chamber. So-and-so has an intimate friend in a statesman's wife. Such-a-one is in league with a formidable journalist.

Then the supernumerary is disgusted and hands in his

resignation. Three-fourths of the supernumeraries leave before they secure permanent berths. Those that remain are either dogged young men or simpletons that say to themselves: "I have been here for three years, I shall get a berth if I stay on long enough!" or those that feel conscious of a vocation. Clearly the supernumerary is, in the administration, pretty much what the novice is in religious orders. He is passing through his probation, and the trial is severe. In the course of it the State discovers the men that can bear hunger and thirst and want without giving way under the strain; men whom drudgery does not disgust; the temperament that will accept the horrible life, the disease, if you prefer it, of a Government office. The supernumerary system from this point of view, so far from being a scandalous attempt on the part of the Government to get work done for nothing, might fairly be regarded as a beneficent institution.

The young fellow with whom Rabourdin was speaking was a poor supernumerary, by name Sébastien de la Roche. He had walked on tiptoe from the Rue du Roi Doré, in the Marias, but there was not the slightest speck of mud on his clothes. He spoke of his "mamma," and dared not lift his eyes to look at Mme. Rabourdin. Her house seemed to him to be a second Louvre. His poor mother had given him a five-franc piece in case it should be absolutely necessary to play; admonishing him, at the same time, to take nothing, to stand the whole time, and to be very careful not to upset a lamp or any of the pretty trifles on the whatnots. He was dressed entirely in black; his gloves had been cleaned with india-rubber, and he exhibited them as little as possible. His fair complexion and bright hazel eyes, with gleams of gold in them, suited well with his thick red-brown hair. Now and again the poor boy would steal a glance at Mme. Rabourdin. "What a beautiful woman!" he said to himself; and when he went home that night he thought of the fairy till sleep closed his eyes.

Rabourdin saw that Sébastien had the making of a good clerk in him; and as he took his position of supernumerary seriously, the chief clerk was very much interested in the poor boy. And not only so, he had made a pretty correct guess at the poverty in the home of a poor widow with a pension of seven hundred francs; Sébastien had not long left school, his education must necessarily have eaten into her savings. So Rabourdin had been quite like a father to the supernumerary; he had often gone out of his way at the board to get a bonus for him; sometimes, indeed, he had paid the money out of his own pocket when the argument had grown too warm with the distributors of favors.

Then he heaped work upon Sébastien; he was training him; he made him fill du Bruel's place; and du Bruel, a playwright known to the dramatic world and the public by the pseudonym of de Cursy, paid Sébastien a hundred crowns out of his salary. Mme. de la Roche and her son regarded Rabourdin as a great man, a guardian angel and a tyrant blended in one; all their hopes depended on him. Sébastien always looked forward to the time when he should be an established clerk. Ah! it is a great day for the supernumerary when he signs his receipt for his salary for the first time. Many a time he has fingered the money for the first month, and the whole of it is not paid over to the mother. Venus smiles upon these first payments from the ministerial cash-box. This hope could only be realized for Sébastien by M. Rabourdin, his only protector; and, accordingly, the lad's devotion to his chief was unbounded. Twice a month he dined in the Rue Duphot; but only with the family, and Rabourdin always brought him home. Madame never gave him an invitation except to balls, when dancing young men were wanted. At the sight of the awful des Lupeaulx his heart beat fast. One of the minister's carriages used to come for des Lupeaulx at half-past four, just as he himself was opening his umbrella under the archway before setting off for thé Marias. His fate



ONE OF THE MINISTER'S CARRIAGES USED TO COME FOR
DES LUPEAULX AT HALF PAST FOUR, JUST AS HE
HIMSELF WAS OPENING HIS UMBRELLA.





depended upon the secretary-general ; one word from the man in the doorway could give him a berth and a salary of twelve hundred francs. (Twelve hundred francs ! It was the height of his ambition ; he and his mother could live in comfort on such a stipend.) And yet the secretary-general did not know him. Des Lupeaulx was scarcely aware there was such a person as Sébastien de la Roche. If La Billardiére's son, a well-to-do supernumerary in Baudoyer's office, chanced to be under the archway at the same time, des Lupeaulx never failed to give him a friendly nod ; but then M. Benjamin de la Billardiére was the son of a minister's cousin.

At this particular moment Rabourdin was giving poor little Sébastien a scolding. Sébastien was the only person wholly in the secret of Rabourdin's vast labors ; Sébastien had copied and recopied the famous memorial on a hundred and fifty sheets of foolscap, to say nothing of tabulated statistics in support of the argument, abstracts on loose leaves, whole columns of bracketed calculations, headings in capital letters, and sub-headings in round hand. The mechanical part that he played in a great design had kindled enthusiasm in the lad of twenty ; he would copy out a whole table again after a single erasure ; he took a pride in the handwriting that counted for something in so great an enterprise.

Sébastien had been so thoughtless as to take the most dangerous rough draft of all to the office in order to finish the fair copy. This was a list of all the men in the head offices in Paris, with notes of their prospects, their present circumstances, and private occupations after hours.

Most civil servants in Paris eke out their salaries by some supplementary method of gaining a livelihood ; unless, like Rabourdin, they possess patriotic ambition or mental superiority. Like M. Saillard, they become sleeping partners in a business, and go through the books at night. A good many clerks, again, marry seamstresses, or manageresses of lottery offices, or their wives keep tobacconists' shops or reading-

rooms. Some, like Mme. Colleville's husband (Mme. Colleville, it may be remembered, was Célestine's rival), have a place in a theatre orchestra. Yet others, like du Bruel, for instance, write plays, comic operas, and melodramas, or take to stage-management. Witness Messrs. Sewrin, Pixérécourt, Planard, and others as instances in point. Pigault-Lebrun, Piis, and Duvicquet held posts in the civil service in their time; and M. Scribe's first publisher was a Treasury clerk.

Rabourdin's inventory contained other details. It was an inquiry into the personal characteristics of individuals. Some statement of their mental and physical capacities must of necessity be included in the survey if the Government was to recognize those who combined intelligence and aptitude for work with good health, for these are three indispensable qualifications in men who must bear the burden of public business and do everything well and quickly. The inventory was a great piece of work; it was the outcome of ten years of labor, and a long experience of men and affairs acquired in the course of intimacies with the heads of other departments; but still it would savor somewhat of espionage, if it fell into the hands of those who did not understand the drift of it. If other eyes saw a single sheet, M. Rabourdin might be ruined. Sébastien's admiration for his chief was unbounded, and he knew nothing as yet of the petty spite of bureaucracy. He had all the disadvantages of simplicity as well as its charm. So, although he had just been scolded for taking the sheet to the office, he had the courage to make a full confession. The rough draft and the fair copy were at the office at that moment; he had put them away in a case where no one could possibly find them. But as he saw the gravity of his mistake, the tears came into his eyes.

"Come, come, sir," Rabourdin added good-naturedly, "let us have no more imprudence; but do not distress yourself. Go down to the office very early to-morrow morning. Here is the key of a box in my cylinder desk; it has a letter

lock ; open it with the word *ciel*, and put the rough draft and the copy safely away."

This piece of confidence dried the lad's tears. His chief tried to induce him to take tea and cake.

"Mamma told me not to take tea because of my digestion," said Sébastien.

"Very well, my dear boy, here are some sandwiches and cream ; come and sit beside me," said the awe-inspiring Mme. Rabourdin, ostentatiously gracious. She made Sébastien sit by her at the table ; and the light touch of the goddess' dress as it brushed his coat brought the poor boy's heart into his mouth. But at this moment the fair lady saw des Lupeaulx, and, instead of waiting till he came to her, she went smiling toward him.

"Why do you stay there as if you were sulking with us ?" she asked.

"I was not sulking," he replied. "But when I came to bring you a bit of good news, I could not help thinking to myself that you would be more cruel now than ever. I foresaw that six months hence I should be almost a stranger to you. No ; we cannot dupe each other—you have too much intelligence, and I on my side have had too much experience—I have been taken in too often, if you like it better. Your end is attained ; it has cost you nothing but smiles and a few gracious words——"

"Dupe each other !" she repeated, apparently half-offended ; "what do you mean ?"

"Yes. Monsieur de la Billardiére is worse again to-day ; and from what the minister said to me, your husband is certain to be head of the division."

He gave her the history of his "scene" with the minister (for so he was pleased to call it), of the countess' jealousy, and what she had said with regard to the curiously granted invitation.

"Monsieur des Lupeaulx," the lady returned with dignity,

"permit me to point out to you that my husband is the most capable chief clerk ; that he stands first in seniority ; that old La Billardiére's appointment over his head made a sensation all through the service ; that he has done the work of the head of the division for the past twelve months ; and that we have neither competitor nor rival."

"That is true."

"Well," she continued, with a smile that displayed the prettiest teeth in the world, "can my friendship for you be spotted with any thought of self-interest? Can you think me capable of it?"

Des Lupeaulx signified his admiring incredulity.

"Ah!" cried she, "a woman's heart will always be a secret for the cleverest of you men. Yes, I have seen your visits here with the greatest pleasure, and there was a thought of self-interest at the back of the pleasure."

"Oh!"

"You have an unbounded future before you," she continued, lowering her voice for his ear ; "you will be a deputy and a minister some day!" (How pleasant it is to an ambitious man to have such words as these murmured in his ear by a pretty woman with a charming voice!) "Ah! I know you better than you know yourself! Rabourdin will be immensely useful to you in your career ; he will do the work while you are at the Chamber. And while you are dreaming of taking office, I want Rabourdin to be a councilor of State and a director-general. Here were two men who might be very useful to one another, while their interests could never clash, so I took it into my head to bring them together. That is a woman's part, is it not? You will both get on faster as friends, and it is time that you both should sail ahead. I have burnt my boats," she added, smiling at him. "You are not as frank with me as I am with you."

"You will not listen to me," he returned in a melancholy tone, in spite of the satisfaction that her words gave him in

the depths of his heart. "What good will your promises of promotion do me if you dismiss me here?"

She turned on him with a Parisienne's quickness.

"Before I listen to you, we must be in a position to understand each other," she said. And she left the elderly coxcomb and went to talk to Mme. de Chessel, a provincial countess, who made as though she meant to go.

"She is no ordinary woman!" thought des Lupeaulx. "I am not myself when I am with her."

And it is a fact that this reprobate who had kept an operadancer six years ago, and since then, thanks to his position, had made a seraglio of pretty women for himself among the wives of the employés, and lived in the world of actresses and journalists—this jaded man of forty, I repeat, was charming with Célestine all that evening, and the very last to leave her salon.

"At last!" thought Mme. Rabourdin, as she went to bed. "At last we shall have the place. Twelve thousand francs a year, beside extras and the rent of the farm at Grajeux; twenty-five thousand francs altogether. It is not comfort, but still it is not poverty."

Célestine thought of her debts till she fell asleep. They could be paid off in three years by putting aside six thousand francs a year. She was far from imagining, as she took Rabourdin's promotion for granted, that somewhere in the Marais a little shrewish, self-seeking, bigoted bourgeoisie that had never set foot in a salon, a woman without influence or connections, was thinking of carrying the place by storm. And if Mme. Rabourdin could have seen Mme. Baudoyer, she would have despised her antagonist; she did not know the power of pettiness, the penetrating force of the grub that brings down the elm-tree by tracing a ring under the bark.

If it were possible in literature to make use of the microscope of a Leuwenhoek, a Malpighi, or a Raspail, as Hoffmann of Berlin attempted to do; if, furthermore, you could magnify

and draw the teredo that brought Holland within a finger's breadth of extinction by gnawing through the dykes, perhaps you might see something within a little resembling the countenances of Messieurs Gigonnet, Mitral, Baudoyer, Saillard, Gaudron, Falleix, Transon, Godard and Company. These human teredos, at any rate, showed what they could do in the thirtieth year of this nineteenth century. And now is the time for displaying the official teredo, as he burrows in the public offices where most of the scenes in this history will take place.

At Paris all public offices are alike. No matter to what department you may betake yourself to ask for the redress of a grievance or for the smallest favor, you will find the same gloomy corridors, the same dimly lighted backways, the same rows of doors each with an enigmatical inscription, and an oval, glazed aperture like an eye; and if you look through those windows, you may see fantastic scenes worthy of Callot. When you discover the object of your search, you pass first of all through an outer room, where the office messenger sits, into a second, the general office; the senior clerk's sanctum lies to the right or left at the farther end of it, and either beyond, or up above, you find the room appropriated to the use of the chief clerk himself. As for the immense personage styled the head of the division under the Empire, the director under the Restoration, and the head of the division once more in our day, he is housed either up above or down below his two or three suites of offices; but occasionally his room lies beyond that of one of the chief clerks. As a rule, it is remarkable for its spaciousness, an advantage not a little prized in these curious honeycomb cells of the big hive known as a government department, or a director-general's department, if there can be said to be such a thing as a director-general.

At the present day almost every department has absorbed all the lesser administration which used to be separate. By this

concentration the directors-general have been shorn of all their splendor in the shape of hôtels, servants, spacious rooms, and little courtyards. Who would recognize the commissioner of woods and forests, or the comptroller of excise, in a man that comes to the Treasury on foot and climbs the stairs to a second floor? Once these dignitaries were councilors, or ministers, or peers of France, they were housed in a splendid hôtel in the Rue Sainte-Avoye or the Rue Saint-Augustin. Messieurs Pasquier and Molé, among others, were content with a comptroller-general's post after they had been in office, thus illustrating the remark made by the Duc d'Antin to Louis XIV. : "Sire, when Jesus Christ died on a Friday, He was sure that on Sunday He should rise from the dead." If the comptroller-general's sphere of activities had increased in extent when his splendor was curtailed, perhaps no great harm would have been done ; but nowadays it is with great difficulty that this personage becomes a master of requests with a paltry twenty thousand francs a year. He is suffered to retain a symbol of his vanished power in the shape of an usher in small clothes, silk stockings, and a cut-away coat, if, indeed, the usher has not latterly been reformed out of existence.

The staff of an office consists, in administrative style, of a messenger, a number of supernumeraries who work for nothing for so many years, and the established clerks ; to wit, the writers or copying clerks, the draughting clerks, and first or senior clerks, under a chief and his assistant, the sub-chief. A *division* usually comprises two or three such offices, and sometimes more. The names of the functionaries vary with the different departments ; in some the senior clerk may be replaced by a head book-keeper or an auditor.

The floor of the outer room, inhabited by the office messenger, is tiled like the passage, the walls are covered with a cheap paper ; the furniture consists of a stove, a big black table, an inkstand and pens, with sundry bare benches for the accommodation of the public that dances attendance there (the office

messenger sits in a comfortable armchair and rests his feet on a hassock). Sometimes, in addition, there is a water-cistern and a tap. The general office is a large and more or less well-lighted apartment. Wooden floors are very rare; parquetry and open fireplaces, like mahogany cupboards, tables, and desks, red and green leather-covered chairs, silken curtains, and other departmental luxuries are appropriated to the use of chief clerks and heads of divisions. The general office is supplied with a stove, the pipe enters the chimney-opening, if there happens to be a flue. The wall-paper is usually plain green or brown. The tables are of black wood.

A clerk's industry may be pretty accurately gauged by his manner of installing himself. A chilly subject will have a kind of wooden foot-rest; the man of bilious-sanguine temperament is content with a straw mat; the lymphatic man that lives in fear of draughts, open doors, or other causes of a fall in the temperature will intrench himself behind a little screen of paste-board cases. There is a closet (*armoire*) somewhere in which office-coats, over-sleeves, eye-shades, caps, fezs, and other gear of the craft are kept. The chimney-piece is almost always loaded with water-bottles and glasses and the remains of luncheons; a lamp may be found in some dark corners. The door of the assistant's sanctum usually stands ajar, so that that gentleman may keep an eye on the general office, prevent too much talk, and come out to confer with the clerks in great emergencies.

You can tell the quality of the official at a pinch from the furniture of the room. The curtains vary, some are of white or colored stuff, some are cotton, some silk; the chairs are of cherry-wood or mahogany, and straw-seated, or upholstered or cushioned with leather; the wall-papers are more or less clean. But to whatever department this kind of public property may chance to belong, nothing can look more strange, when removed from its surroundings, than a collection of furniture that has seen so many changes of government and come

through so much rough treatment. Of all removals in Paris, the migration of a public office is the most grotesque to witness. The genius of Hoffmann, that hight priest of the impossible, could not invent anything more whimsical. Some unaccountable change is wrought in the pushcarts. The yawning pasteboard cases leave a track of dust along the street; the tables appear with their castors in the air. There is something dismaying in the aspect of the ramshackle arm-chairs and inconceivably odd gear with which the administration of France is carried on. In some ways it reminds you of a turnout of the properties of a theatre, in others of the stock-in-trade of an acrobat. Even so, upon some obelisk you may behold traces of intelligent purpose in the shadowy lettering which troubles your imagination, after the wont of most things of which you cannot discern the end. And lastly, these utensils from the administrative kitchen are all so old, so battered, so faded, that the dirtiest array of pots and pans would be an infinitely more pleasing spectacle.

If foreign and provincial readers would form an accurate idea of the inner life of a public office at Paris, it may, perhaps, suffice to describe M. de la Billardière's division, for its chief characteristics are common, no doubt, to all European administrations.

First and foremost, picture, to suit your fancy, the personage thus set forth in large type in the "Annuaire:"

"HEAD OF THE DIVISION: M. le Baron Flamet de la BILLARDIÈRE (Athanase-Jean-François-Michel), formerly Grand Provost of the Department of the Corrèze; Gentleman in Ordinary of the Chamber; Master of Requests Extraordinary, President of the Electoral College of the Department of the Dordogne, officer of the Legion of Honor; Chevalier of St. Louis, and of the foreign orders of Christ, of Isabella, of St. Vladimir, etc., etc.; Member of the Académie of Gers and of many other learned Societies, Vice-President of the Société

des Bonnes-Lettres; Member of the Association of St. Joseph, and of the Prisoners' Aid Society; one of the Mayors of Paris, and so forth, and so forth."

The man that took up so much space in print was occupying at that moment some five feet and a half by two feet six inches on the bed whereon he lay, his head adorned with a cotton nightcap tied with flame-colored ribbons; with Desplein, the King's surgeon, and young Dr. Bianchon to visit him, and two elderly kinswomen to mount guard over him on either side; a host of phials, bandages, syringes, and other instruments of death encompassing him about, and the curé of Saint-Roch ever on the watch to insinuate a word or two as to the salvation of his soul.

Every morning his son, Benjamin de la Billardière, would meet the two doctors with the formula: "Do you think that I shall be so fortunate as to keep my father?" It was only that very day that, by a slip of the tongue, he had brought out the word "unfortunate" instead.

La Billardière's division was situated below the latitude of the attics by seventy-one degrees of longitude, measured by the steps of the staircase, in the departmental ocean of a great and imposing pile of buildings. It lay on the northeast side of a courtyard, a space formerly taken up by the stables, and now occupied by Clergeot's division. The two distinct sets of offices were divided by the breadth of the stairhead. All the doors were labeled along a spacious corridor illuminated by borrowed lights. The offices and antechambers belonging to the two chief clerks, Messrs. Rabourdin and Baudoyer, were below on the second floor; and M. de la Billardière's antechamber, sitting-room, and two private offices lay immediately beyond M. Rabourdin's rooms.

The second floor was divided in two by an entresol, and here M. Ernest de la Brière was established. M. Ernest de la Brière was an occult power which shall be described in a few

words, for he certainly deserves a parenthetic mention. So long as the minister was in office, this young man was his private secretary. For which reason his room communicated by a secret door with his excellency's sanctum. His excellency, be it said, had two private cabinets; one of these was in keeping with the state apartments in which he received visitors, and here he conferred with great personages in the absence of his secretary; the other was the study in which he retired to work with his private secretary and without witnesses. Now a private secretary is to a single minister what des Lupeaulx was to a whole government. Between young La Brière and des Lupeaulx there was just the difference that separates the aide-de-camp from the chief of the staff. The private secretary is a minister's apprentice; he takes himself off and reappears with his patron. If the minister is still in favor, or if he has hopes when he goes out of office, he takes his secretary with him, only to bring him back again. If it is otherwise, he puts his protege out to grass in some administrative pasture—in the Audit Department, for example, that hostelry where secretaries wait till the storm passes over. A young gentleman in this position is not precisely a statesman; he is a man of politics; sometimes, too, he represents the politics of a man. When you come to think of the quantity of letters which he must open and read, to say nothing of his other occupations, is it not evident that such a commodity would be extremely expensive under an absolute monarchy? At Paris a victim of this sort can be had for an annual sum varying from ten to twenty thousand francs; but the young man has the benefit of the minister's carriages, boxes at the theatre, and invitations. The Emperor of Russia would be very glad to give fifty thousand francs a year for such a marvelously groomed and carefully curled Constitutional poodle; it is such a good guard; such an amiable, sweet-tempered, docile animal; so fond and—faithful! But, alas! the private secretary is not to be grown, found, discovered, or developed

anywhere save in the hotbeds of a representative government. Under an absolute monarch you can only have courtiers and servitors; whereas with a Charter, free men will serve you, and flatter you, and fawn upon you. Wherefore ministers in France are more fortunate than women or crowned kings; they have somebody to understand them. Perhaps, at the same time, private secretaries are as much to be pitied as women or white paper—they must take all that is put upon them. Like a virtuous wife, a private secretary is bound to display his talents in private only, and for his minister. If he exhibits his abilities in public, he is ruined. Therefore a private secretary is a friend given by the Government. But to return to our Government offices.

Three office messengers lived in harmony in La Billardière's division, to wit, one messenger for the two offices; another shared by the two chief clerks; and a third for the head of the division exclusively. All three were clothed and warmed at the public expense; all three wore the well-known livery—royal blue with a scarlet piping for an undress uniform, and a wide red-white-and-blue gagoon for state occasions. La Billardière's man had been put into an usher's uniform. The secretary-general, willing to flatter the self-love of a minister's cousin, permitted an encroachment which reflected glory upon the administration. These three messengers were veritable pillars of the department and experts in bureaucratic customs. They wanted for nothing; they were well warmed and clothed at the expense of the State; and well-to-do, because they were frugal. They probed every man in the department to the quick; for the one interest in their lives consisted in watching the clerks and studying their hobbies. Wherefore they knew exactly how far it was safe to go in the matter of loans, performing their commissions with the utmost discretion, undertaking errands to the pawnbroker, buying pawntickets, lending money without interest. No one, however, borrowed any sum however trifling without giving

a gratuity; and as the loans were usually very small, the practice was equivalent to the payment of a usurious interest.

The three masterless servants had a salary of nine hundred francs; New Year's tips and perquisites raised the income to twelve hundred; and they were in a position to make almost as much again out of the clerks, for all the breakfasts of those who breakfasted passed through their hands. In some Government offices the doorkeeper actually provides the breakfasts. The doorkeeper's place in the finance department had been worth something like four thousand francs to fat old Thuillier senior, whose son was now a clerk in La Billardière's division. Sometimes attendants feel a five-franc piece slipped into the palm of their right hands if a petitioner is in a hurry, an occurrence which they take with rare impassibility. The seniors only wear their uniform when on duty, and go out in plain clothes.

The messenger of the general office was the best off, for he exploited the staff of clerks. He was a thick-set, corpulent man of sixty, with bristling white hair, an apoplectic neck, a common pimpled countenance, gray eyes, and a mouth like a stove-door; here you have a sketch of Antoine, the oldest messenger in the department. Antoine had sent for his nephews from Échelles in Savoy, and found places for them; Laurent with the chief clerks, Gabriel with the head of the division. The two Savoyards were dressed like their uncle, in broadcloth. As to appearance, they were simply ordinary servants in uniform. At night they took checks at a subsidized theatre (La Billardière had obtained the places for them). Both had married skilled lace-cleaners, who also undertook fine darning and repairs of cashmere shawls. As the uncle was a bachelor, the whole family lived together, and lived very much more comfortably than most chief clerks. Gabriel and Laurent, having only been a matter of ten years in the service, had not yet learned to look down upon the government costume; they went abroad in uniform, proud as

dramatic authors after a success from a pecuniary point of view. The uncle, whom they took for a very astute person, and served with blind devotion, gradually initiated them into the mysteries of the craft.

The three had just opened the offices. Between seven and eight they used to sweep out the offices, read the newspapers, or discuss the politics of the division with other porters, after the manner of their kind, with due exchange of information. Modern domestic servants are perfectly acquainted with the affairs of the family; and the servants of the department, like spiders in the middle of a web, could feel the slightest disturbance in any part of it.

It was a Thursday morning, the day after the minister's reception and Mme. Rabourdin's *At Home*. Uncle Antoine, with the assistance of his nephews, was shaving in the ante-chamber on the third floor, when the arrival of one of the clerks took them all by surprise.

"That is Monsieur Dutocq," remarked Antoine; "I know him by the way he comes sneaking in. He always goes about as if he were skating, he does. He drops down upon you before you can tell which way he came. Yesterday, he was the last to leave the office, a thing that hasn't happened three times since he has been here."

A man of thirty-eight, with a long visage of a bilious hue, and close-cropped woolly gray hair; a low forehead, thick eyebrows that met in the middle, a crooked nose, compressed lips, light green eyes that never looked you in the face; a tall figure, one shoulder slightly larger than the other; a brown coat, black waistcoat, a silk handkerchief round the throat, buff trousers, black woolen stockings, and shoes with mud-bedraggled laces; here you have M. Dutocq, senior clerk in Rabourdin's office. Dutocq was incompetent and indolent. He detested his chief. Nothing could be more natural. Rabourdin had no weakness to flatter, no vice to which Dutocq could pander. The chief was far too high-minded to injure a

subordinate ; but, at the same time, he was too clear-sighted to be duped by appearances. Dutocq only remained on sufferance, through Rabourdin's generosity ; there was no prospect of advancement unless there was a change of chief. Dutocq was well aware that he himself was not fit to fill a higher post, but he knew enough of Government offices to understand that incompetence does not prevent a man from affixing his signature to the work of others. He would get out of the difficulty by finding a Rabourdin among the draughting clerks, for La Billardiére's promotion had been a striking and disastrous object lesson to the department. Spite when combined with self-interest is a very fair substitute for intelligence ; and Dutocq was very spiteful, and very much bent on his own interests. Wherefore he had set himself to consolidate his position by taking the office of spy upon himself. After 1816 he became a bigot of the deepest dye ; he foresaw that persons then indiscriminately labeled " jesuits," by fools that knew no better, would shortly be in favor. He belonged to the congregation, though he was not admitted to its inner circles. He went from office to office, sounded consciences with coarse jokes, and returned to paraphrase his " reports " for des Lupeaulx's benefit. Des Lupeaulx was kept informed in this way of everything that went on ; and, indeed, the secretary-general's profound knowledge of the ins and outs of affairs often astonished the minister. Dutocq in good earnest was the Bonneau of a political Bonneau ; he was intriguing for the honor of taking des Lupeaulx's secret messages, and des Lupeaulx tolerated the unclean creature, thinking that he might sometime make him useful, were it only to get himself or some great person out of a scrape by some shameful marriage. On some such good fortune indeed Dutocq was reckoning, for he remained a bachelor. The pair understood one another. Dutocq had succeeded M. Poirer senior, who retired to a boarding-house, and was put on a pension in 1814, at which time there had been a grand general

reform of the staff. Dutocq lived on a fifth floor, in a house with a passage entry in the Rue Saint-Louis-Saint-Honoré. As an enthusiastic amateur of old prints, it was his ambition to possess complete collections of the works of Rembrandt, Charlet, Sylvestre, Audran, Callot, Albrecht Dürer, and others; and, like most collectors who live by themselves, he aspired to pick these things up cheaply. Dutocq took his meals in a boarding-house in the Rue de Beaune, and spent his evenings at the Palais Royal. Sometimes he went to the play, thanks to du Bruel, who would give him an author's ticket every week. A word as to du Bruel.

Du Bruel came to the office simply for the sake of drawing his salary and believing and saying that he was the chief clerk's assistant; but Sébastien did his work, as has been seen, and received a very inadequate return for it. Du Bruel did the minor theatres for a ministerial paper, for which he also wrote articles to order. His position was known, defined, and unassailable. Nor did he fail in any of the little diplomatic shifts that gain a man the good-will of his fellow-creatures. He always offered Mme. Rabourdin a box on a first night, for instance, and called for her and took her back in a carriage, an attention of which she was very sensible. Rabourdin was very easy with his subordinates, very little given to tormenting them; so he allowed du Bruel to attend rehearsals and to come and go and work at his vaudevilles pretty much as he pleased. M. le Duc de Chaulieu was aware that du Bruel was writing a novel, and meant to dedicate the book to him. Du Bruel accordingly dressed as carelessly as a vaudevilliste; in the morning he appeared in footed trousers and thin-soled shoes, a superannuated waistcoat, a greenish black greatcoat and a black cravat, but at night he was fashionably arrayed, for he aimed at being a gentleman.

Du Bruel lived, for sufficient reasons, with Florine, the actress for whom he wrote parts; and Florine at that time lodged with Tullia, a dancer more remarkable for beauty than

for talent. This arrangement permitted him to see a good deal of the Duc de Rhétoré, oldest son of the Duc de Chaulieu, a favorite with the King. The Duc de Chaulieu had obtained the cross of the Legion of Honor for du Bruel after his eleventh play on a topic of the hour. Du Bruel—or de Cursy, if you prefer it—was at work at the moment on a drama in five acts for the Français. Sébastien had a strong liking for the assistant, who sometimes gave him an order for the pit. Du Bruel used to point out any doubtful passages beforehand, and Sébastien, with the sincerity of youth, would applaud with all his might; he regarded du Bruel as a great man of letters. Once it happened that a vaudeville written, as usual, with two collaborators had been hissed in several places.

“The public find out the parts written in collaboration,” du Bruel remarked next day to Sébastien.

“Why don’t you write it all yourself?” Sébastien answered in the simplicity of his heart.

There were excellent reasons why du Bruel should not write the whole himself. He was the third part of a dramatic author. Few people are aware that a dramatic author is a composite being. First, there is the Man of Ideas; it is his duty to find the subject and construct the framework or *scenario* of the vaudeville; the Plodder works out the dialogue, while the Man of Details sets the couplets to music, arranges the choruses and the accompaniments, and grafts the songs into the plot. The same personage also looks after the practical aspects of the play; he sees after the drawing up of the placards, and never leaves the manager until he has definitely secured the representation of a piece written by the three partners for the following day.

Du Bruel, a born plodder, was in the habit of reading new books at the office, and picking out the clever bits; he made a note of these, and embroidered his dialogues with them. Cursy (that was his *nom de guerre*) was held in esteem by his

collaborators on account of his impeccable accuracy; the Man of Ideas could feel sure that Cursy would comprehend him, and might fold his arms. His popularity among the clerks was sufficient to bring them out in a body to applaud his pieces, for he had the reputation of a "good-fellow," and he deserved it. He was free-handed; it was never very difficult to screw a bowl of punch or ices out of him, and he would lend fifty francs and never ask for the money. Du Bruel was a man of regular habits; he had a house in the country at Aulnay, and found investments for his money. Beside his salary of four thousand five hundred francs, he had a pension of twelve hundred from the civil list, and eight hundred francs out of the hundred thousand crowns voted by the Chamber for the encouragement of the arts. Add to these various sources of income some nine thousand francs brought in by the "thirds," "fourths," and "halves" of vaudevilles at three different theatres, and you will understand at once that du Bruel was broad, rotund, and fat, and looked like a man of substance. As to his morals, he was Tullia's lover; and, as usual, believed that he was preferred to her protector, the brilliant Duc de Rhétoré.

Dutocq beheld, not without dismay, the *liaison* (as he called it) between des Lupeaulx and Mme. Rabourdin. His smothered fury was increased. What was more, his prying eyes could not fail to detect that Rabourdin was throwing himself into some great work outside his official duties, and he despaired of finding out anything about it, whereas little Sébastien was either wholly or partly in the secret. Dutocq had tried successfully to make an ally of M. Godard, Baudoyer's assistant, du Bruel's colleague; the high esteem in which Dutocq held Baudoyer had led to an acquaintance. Not that Dutocq was sincere; but by crying up Baudoyer and saying nothing of Rabourdin, he satisfied his spleen, after the fashion of petty minds.

Joseph Godard was Mitral's cousin by the mother's side.

His relationship to Baudoyer, therefore, was distant enough, but he had founded hopes upon it; he meant to marry Mlle. Baudoyer, and consequently Isidore was a brilliant genius in his eyes. He professed a high respect for Elizabeth and Mme. Saillard, failing to perceive that Mme. Baudoyer was "simmering" Falleix for her daughter; and he used to bring little presents for Mlle. Baudoyer—artificial flowers, sugar-plums on New Year's Day, and pretty boxes on her birthday. Godard was a man of six-and-twenty, a dull plodder, well-conducted as a young lady, humdrum and apathetic. Cafés, cigars, and horse exercise he held in abhorrence; he went to bed regularly at ten, and rose at seven. His various social talents brought him into high favor with the Saillards and Baudoyers; he could play dance music on the flageolet; and in the National Guard he took a fife in the band to avoid night-duty. Natural history was Godard's special hobby. He collected minerals and shells; he could stuff birds; his rooms were warehouses of curiosities picked up for small sums; he had landscape-stones, models of palaces in cork, various petrified objects from the springs of Saint-Allyre at Clermont (Auvergne), and the like. Godard used to buy up scent-bottles to hold his specimens of baryta, his sulphates, salts, magnesia, coral, and the like. He kept collections of butterflies in frames; he covered the walls with dried fish-skins and Chinese umbrellas.

Godard lived with his sister, a flower-maker, in the Rue de Richelieu. But though this model young man was much admired by mothers of daughters, it is a fact that he was held in much contempt by his sister's work-girls, and more particularly by the young lady at the desk, who had long hoped to entangle him. He was thin and slim, and of average height; there were dark circles about his eyes; his beard was scanty; his breath was bad (according to Bixiou). Joseph Godard took little pains with himself; his clothes did not fit him, his trousers were large and baggy; he wore white stockings all

the year round, a narrow-brimmed hat, and laced shoes. At the office he sat in a cane chair with the seat broken through, and a round leather cushion on the top of it. He complained a good deal of indigestion. His principal failing was a tendency to propose picnics and Sunday excursions in the summer to Montmorency, or a walk to a dairy on the Boulevard Mont Parnasse.

After the acquaintance between Dutocq and Godard had lasted for some six months, Dutocq began to go now and again to Mlle. Godard's, hoping to do a piece of business in the house, or to discover some feminine treasure.

And so it came to pass that in Dutocq and Godard Baudoyer had two men to sing his praises in the office. M. Saillard was incapable of discovering Dutocq's real character; sometimes he would drop in to speak to him at his desk. Young La Billardiére, one of Baudoyer's supernumeraries, belonged to this set. Cleverer men laughed not a little at the alliance of Godard, Dutocq, and Baudoyer. Bixiou dubbed it *la Trinité sans Esprit*, and christened little La Billardiére "the Paschal Lamb."

"You are up early," said Antoine, with a laugh, as Dutocq came in.

"And as for you, Antoine," returned Dutocq, "it is plain that the newspapers sometimes come before you give them out to us."

"It happens so to-day," said Antoine, not a whit disconcerted; "they never come in at the same time for two days together."

The nephews looked furtively at one another, as if to say admiringly: "What a cool hand!"

"He brings me in two sous on his breakfasts," muttered Antoine as Dutocq shut the door, "but I would as soon be without it to have him out of the department."

"Ah! you are not the first to-day, Monsieur Sébastien," he remarked, a quarter of an hour afterward.

"Who ever can have come!" the poor boy asked, and his face turned white.

"Monsieur Dutocq," said Laurent.

Virgin natures possess an unusual degree of that inexplicable power of second-sight which perhaps depends upon an unjaded nervous system, upon the sensibility of an organization that may be called new. Sébastien had guessed that Dutocq hated the venerated Rabourdin. So Laurent had scarcely pronounced the name before an ugly presentiment flashed upon the supernumerary.

"I suspected as much," he exclaimed, and he was off like an arrow down the corridor.

"There will be a row in the offices," remarked Antoine, shaking his white head as he put on his uniform. "It is easy to see that Monsieur le Baron is going to his last account. Yes, Madame Gruget, his nurse, told me that he would not live the day out. What a stir there will be here, to be sure! Go and see if the stoves are burning up, some of you. *Sabre de bois** all of them will come tumbling in upon us in a minute."

"The poor little youngster was in a fine taking when he heard that that jesuit of a Monsieur Dutocq was in before him, and that's a fact," commented Laurent.

"Well, I for one have told him (for, after all, one can't do less than tell a good clerk the truth, and what I call a good clerk is a clerk like this youngster, that pays up his ten francs sharp on New Year's Day), I have told him, I say: 'The more you do, the more they will want you to do, and they will leave you where you are.' But it is no good. He will not listen to me. He kills himself with stopping till five o'clock, an hour after everybody else" (Antoine shrugged his shoulders). "All nonsense; that's not the way to get on! And here's proof of it—nothing has been said yet of taking on the poor boy as an established clerk, and an excellent one he would

* Wooden sword.

make. After two years too! It sets your back up, upon my word!"

"Monsieur Rabourdin has a liking for Monsieur Sébastien," said Laurent.

"But Monsieur Rabourdin is not a minister," retorted Antoine. "It will be a hot day when he is a minister; the fowls will cut their teeth. He is much too—never mind what! When I think that I take round the muster-roll of salaries, to be receipted by humbugs that stop away and do what they please, while little La Roche is working himself to death, I wonder whether God gives a thought to Government offices. And as for these pets of Monsieur le Maréchal and Monsieur le Duc; what do they give you? They *thank* you" (Antoine made a patronizing nod). "'Thanks, my dear Antoine.' A pack of do-nothings; let them work, or they will bring on another Revolution! You should have seen whether they came it over us like this in Monsieur Robert Lindet's time; for, such as you see me, I came to this shop under Monsieur Robert Lindet. The clerks used to work when he was here! You ought to have seen those quill-drivers scratching away till midnight, all the stoves gone out, and nobody so much as noticing it; but for one thing, the guillotine was there too; and no need to say it was a very different thing from simply taking down their names as we do now when they come late."

"Daddy Antoine," began Gabriel, "since you are in a talking humor this morning, what do you make out that a clerk is?"

"A clerk!" Antoine returned gravely. "A clerk is a man that sits in an office and writes. What am I saying? Where should we be without clerks? Just go and look after your stoves and never say a word against the clerks. The stove in the large room draws like fury, Gabriel; you must shut off some of the draught."

Antoine took up his position at the stairhead, so that he

could see all the clerks as they came in under the arched gateway. He knew everybody in every office in the department, and used to watch their ways and notice the differences in their dress. And here, before entering upon the drama, it is necessary to give portraits in outline of the principal actors in La Billardiére's division; for not merely will the reader make the acquaintance of the various types of the *genus* clerk, but he will find in them the justification of Rabourdin's observations, and likewise of the title of this essentially Parisian Study.

And on this head, let there be no misapprehensions: from the point of view of poverty and eccentricity there are clerks and clerks, just as there are fagots and fagots. In the first place, you must distinguish between the clerk in Paris and his provincial brother. The provincial clerk is well off. He is spaciouly housed; he has a garden; he is comfortable, as a rule, in his office. Sound wine is not dear; he does not dine off horse-steaks; he is acquainted with the luxury of dessert. People may not know precisely what he eats, but every one will tell you that he does not "eat up his salary." So far from running into debt, he positively saves on his income. If he is a bachelor, mothers of daughters greet him as he passes; if he is married, he and his wife go to balls at the receiver-general's, at the prefecture, at the sub-prefecture. People take an interest in his character; he makes conquests; he has a reputation for intelligence; his loss would probably be felt; the whole town knows him, and takes an interest in his wife and family. He gives evening parties; he may become a deputy if he has private means, and his father-in-law is in easy circumstances. His wife is always under the minute and inquisitive spy system of a small town; if he is unfortunate in his married life, he knows it, whereas a clerk at Paris is not bound to hear of his misfortune. Lastly, the provincial clerk is "somebody," while the Parisian is almost "nobody."

The next comer was a draughting clerk, Phellion by name,

a respectable father of a family. He was in Rabourdin's office. His chief's influence had obtained education for each of his two boys at half-cost at the Collège Henri IV., a well-timed favor; for Phellion had a third child, a girl, who was being educated free of expense in a boarding-school where her mother gave music lessons, and her father taught history and geography of an evening. Phellion was a man of forty-five, and a sergeant-major in the National Guard. He was very ready to give sympathy; but he never had a centime to spare. He lived, not very far from the Sourds-Muet, in the Rue du Faubourg Saint-Jacques, on a floor of a house, with a garden attached. "His place," to use his own expression, only cost four hundred francs. The draughting clerk was proud of his position, and rejoiced in his lot; he worked industriously for the Government, believed that he was serving his country, and boasted of his indifference to party politics; he looked at nothing but *AUTHORITY*. Sometimes, to his delight, M. Rabourdin would ask him to stay for half an hour to finish some piece of work. Then Phellion would go to the boarding-school in the Rue Notre Dame des Champs, where his wife taught music, and say to the Demoiselles La Grave with whom he dined—

"Affairs compelled me to stay late at the office, mesdemoiselles. When a man is in the service of the Government, he is not his own master."

Phellion had compiled various school-books in the form of question and answer for the use of ladies' schools. These "small but condensed treatises," as he called them, were on sale at the University booksellers' under the name of "Historical and Geographical Catechisms." He felt it incumbent upon him to present Mme. Rabourdin with each of these works as they came out, taking a copy printed on hand-made paper and bound in crimson morocco. On these occasions he appeared in the Rue Duphot in full dress: silk small clothes, silk stockings, shoes with gold buckles, and so forth. M.

Phellion gave beer and patty soirees on Thursday evenings after the boarders had gone to bed. They played bouillotte, with five sous in the pool ; and in spite of the slenderness of the stakes, it once fell out that M. Laudigeois, a registrar's clerk, lost ten francs in an evening by reckless gambling.

The walls of the sitting-room were covered with a green American paper with a red border, and adorned with portraits of the Royal family. The visitor might behold his majesty the King, the Dauphiness, and MADAME ; with a pair of framed engravings, to wit, Mazeppa, after Horace Vernet, and The Pauper's Funeral, after Vigneron. This last-named work of art, according to Phellion, was "sublime in its conception. It ought to console the lower classes by reminding them that they had more devoted friends than men, friends whose affections go beyond the grave." From those words you can guess that Phellion was the sort of man to take his children to the Cimetière de l'Ouest on All-Souls' Day, and point out the twenty square yards of earth (purchased "in perpetuity") where his father and his mother-in-law lay buried. "We shall come here some day," he used to say, to familiarize his offspring with the idea of death.

It was one of Phellion's great amusements to explore Paris. He had treated himself to a map. Antony, Arcueil, Bièvre, Fontenay-aux-Roses, and Aulnay, all of them famous as the abode of more than one great writer, he knew already by heart, and he hoped in time to know all the suburbs on the West side. His eldest son he destined for the service of the Government ; the second was to go to the Polytechnic. He often used to say to his eldest: "When you have the honor to be employed by the Government !" but, at the same time, he suspected the boy of a turn for the exact sciences, and strove to repress the tendency, holding in reserve the extremity of leaving him to shift for himself if he persisted in his ways.

Phellion had never ventured to ask M. Ravourdin to dine with him, though he would have regarded such a day as one

of the greatest in his life. He used to say that if he could leave one of his sons to walk in the footsteps of M. Rabourdin, he should die the happiest father in the world. He dinned the praises of the worthy and much-respected chief into the ears of the Demoiselles La Grave, till those ladies longed to see M. Rabourdin, as a lad might crave a glimpse of M. de Chateaubriand. They would have been very glad, they said, to be intrusted with the education of his "young lady." If the minister's carriage chanced to come in or out, Phellion took off his hat very respectfully whether there was anybody in it or not, and said that it would be well for France if everybody held authority in sufficient honor to revere it even in its insignia.

When Rabourdin sent for him "downstairs" to explain his work, Phellion summoned up all his intelligence, and listened to his chief's lightest words as a dilettante listens to an air at the Italiens. He sat silent in the office, his feet perched aloft on his wooden foot-rest; he never stirred from his place; he conscientiously gave his mind to his work. In administrative correspondence he expressed himself with solemnity; he took everything seriously; he emphasized the minister's orders by translating them into pompous phraseology. Yet, great as he was upon propriety, a disastrous thing had happened once in his career—a disaster indeed. In spite of the minute care with which he drafted his letters, he once allowed a phrase thus conceived to escape him:

"You will therefore repair to the closet with the necessary paper."

The copying-clerks, delighted at the chance of a laugh at the expense of the harmless creature, went to consult Rabourdin behind Phellion's back. Rabourdin, knowing his draughting clerk's character, could not help smiling as he indorsed the margin with a note:

"You will appear at the private office with the documents indicated."

The alteration was shown to Phellion; he studied it, pondered and weighed the difference between the expressions, and candidly admitted that it would have taken him a couple of hours to find the equivalents. "Monsieur Rabourdin is a man of genius!" he cried. He always thought that his colleagues had shown a want of consideration for him by referring the matter so promptly to the chief; but he had too much respect for the established order of things not to admit that they had acted within their right, and so much the more so since he, Phellion, was absent at the time. Still, in their place, he himself would have waited—there was no pressing need for the circular. This affair cost him several nights' rest. If any one wished to make him angry, they had only to remind him of the accursed phrase by asking as he went out, "Have you the necessary paper?" At which question the worthy draughting clerk would turn and give the clerks a withering glance. "It seems to me, gentlemen, that your remark is extremely unbecoming." One day, however, he waxed so wroth that Rabourdin was obliged to interfere, and the clerks were forbidden to afterward make any allusions to the affair.

M. Phellion looked rather like a meditative ram. His face was somewhat colorless and marked with smallpox, his lips were thick and underhung, his eyes were pale blue, and in figure he was rather above average height. Neat in his person he was bound to be, as a master of history and geography in a ladies' school; he wore good linen, a pleated shirt-front, an open black kerseymere waistcoat that afforded glimpses of the braces which his daughter embroidered for him, a diamond pin, a black coat, and blue trousers. In winter he adopted a nut-brown box-coat with three capes, and it was his wont to carry a loaded cane—"a precaution rendered necessary by the extreme loneliness of some parts of the neighborhood." He had given up the habit of taking snuff, a reform which he was wont to cite as a striking instance of the command that a man

may gain over himself. Having what he called a "fat chest," it was his wont to ascend staircases slowly for fear of contracting an asthma.

He saluted Antoine with dignity.

A copying clerk, an odd contrast to this exemplary worthy, immediately followed. Vimeux was a young fellow of five-and-twenty, with a salary of fifteen hundred francs. He was well made and slim-waisted; his eyes, eyebrows, and beard were as black as jet; he had good teeth and sweetly pretty hands, while his mustache was so luxuriant and well-cared for that its cultivation might have been his principal occupation in life. Vimeux's aptitude for his work was so great that he had always finished it long before anybody else.

"He is a gifted young man!" Phellion would exclaim, as he saw Vimeux cross his legs, at a loss to know what to do with the rest of his time.

"And look, now!" he would say to du Bruel, "how exquisitely neat it is!"

Vimeux breakfasted off a roll of bread and a glass of water, dined at Katcomb's for twenty sous, and lived in furnished lodgings at twelve francs a month. Dress was his one joy and pleasure in life. He ruined himself with wonderful waistcoats, tight-fitting or semi-fitting trousers, thin boots, carefully cut coats that outlined his figure, bewitching collars, fresh gloves, and hats. His hand was adorned by a signet-ring, which he wore outside his glove; he carried an elegant walking-cane, and did his best to look and behave like a wealthy young man. Toothpick in hand, he would repair to the main alley in the Tuileries gardens, and stroll about, looking for all the world like a millionaire just arisen from table. He had studied the art of twirling a cane and ogling with an eye to business, *à l'américaine*, as Bixiou said; for Vimeux lived in the hope that some widow, Englishwoman or foreign lady, might be smitten with his charms; he used to laugh to show his fine set of teeth; he went without socks to

have his hair curled every day. Vimeux laid it down as a fixed principle that an eligible hunchbacked girl must have six thousand livres a year; he would take a woman of five-and-forty with an income of eight thousand, or an English-woman with a thousand crowns.

Phellion took compassion on the young man. He was so much pleased with Vimeux's penmanship that he lectured him, and tried to persuade him to turn writing-master; it was, he said, a respectable profession which might ameliorate his existence and even render it agreeable. He promised him the school kept by the Demoiselles La Grave. But Vimeux's belief in his star was not to be shaken—it was too firmly fixed in his head. He continued, therefore, to exhibit himself like one of Chevet's sturgeons; albeit his luxuriant mustache had been displayed in vain for three years. Vimeux lowered his eyes every time that he passed Antoine; he owed the porter thirty francs for his breakfasts, and yet toward noon he always asked him to bring him a roll.

Rabourdin had tried several times to put a little sound sense into the young fellow's foolish head, but he gave up at last. Vimeux's father was a clerk to a justice of the peace in the department of the Nord. Adolphe Vimeux had given up dinners at Katcomb's lately, and lived entirely on bread. He was saving up to buy a pair of spurs and a riding-switch. In the office they jeered at his matrimonial calculations, calling him the Villiaume pigeon; but any scoff at this vacuous Amadis could only be attributed to the mocking spirit that creates the vaudeville, for Vimeux was a friendly creature, and nobody's enemy but his own. The great joke in both offices was to bet that he wore corsets.

Vimeux began his career under Baudoyer, and intrigued to be transferred to Rabourdin, because Baudoyer was inexorable on the matter of "Englishmen," for so the clerks called duns. The "Englishmen's" day is the day on which the public are admitted; and creditors, being sure of finding

their debtors, flock thither to worry them, asking when they will be paid, threatening to attach their salaries. Baudoyer the inexorable compelled his clerks to face it out. "It was their affair," he said, "not to get into debt;" and he regarded his severity as a thing necessary for the public welfare. Rabourdin, on the other hand, stood between his clerks and their creditors; duns were put out at the door. "Government offices," he said, "were not meant for the transaction of private business." Loud was the scoffing when Vimeux clanked up the stairs and along the corridors with spurs on his boots. Bixiou, practical joker to the department, drew a caricature of Vimeux mounted on a pasteboard hobby-horse, and sent the drawing circulating through Clergeot's and Billardiére's divisions. A subscription list was attached. M. Baudoyer's name was put down for a hundredweight of hay from the stock supplied for his own private consumption, and all the clerks cut gibes at their neighbor's expense. Vimeux himself, like the good-natured fellow that he was, subscribed under the name of "Miss Fairfax."

The handsome clerk of Vimeux's stamp has his post for a living and his face for his fortune. He is a faithful supporter of masked balls at carnival-tide, though sometimes even there he fails in his quest. A good many of his kind give up the search, and end by marrying milliners or old women; sometimes some young lady is charmed with his fine person, and with her he spins out a clandestine romance that ends in marriage, a love story diversified by tedious letters, which, however, produce their effect. Occasionally one here and there waxes bolder. He sees a woman drive past in the Champ-Élysées, procures her address, hurls impassioned letters at her, finds a bargain which, unfortunately, encourages ignoble speculation of this kind.

The Bixiou (pronounced Bisiou) mentioned above was a caricaturist; Dutocq and Rabourdin, whom he dubbed *La vertueuse Rabourdin*, were alike fair game to him; Baudoyer

he called *la Place-Baudoyer*, by way of summing up his chief's commonplace character; du Bruel was christened *Flonflon*. Bixiou was beyond question the wittiest and cleverest man in the division, or, indeed, in the department; but his was a monkey's cleverness, desultory and aimless. Baudoyer and Godard protected him in spite of his malicious ways, because he was extremely useful to them; he did their work for them out of hand. He wanted du Bruel's or Godard's place, but he stood in his own light. Sometimes—this was when he had done some good stroke of business, such as the portraits in the Fualdès case (which he drew out of his own head), or pictures of the Castaing trial—he turned the service to ridicule. Sometimes he would be very industrious in a sudden fit of desire to get on; and then again he would neglect the work for a vaudeville, which he never by any chance finished. He was, moreover, selfish, close-fisted, and yet extravagant; or, in other words, he lavished money only upon himself; he was fractious, aggressive, and indiscreet, making mischief for pure love of mischief.

Bixiou was specially given to attacking the weak; he respected nothing and no one; he believed neither in France, nor God, nor Art, in neither Greek nor Turk, nor Champ-d'Asile, nor in the Monarchy; and he made a point of jeering at everything which he did not understand. He was the very first to put a priest's black cap on Charles X.'s head on five-franc pieces. He took off Dr. Gall at his lectures till the most closely buttoned diplomat must have choked with laughter. It was a standing joke with this formidable wag to heat the office stoves so hot that if any one imprudently ventured out of the sudatory he was pretty certain to catch cold; while Bixiou enjoyed the further satisfaction of wasting the fuel supplied by the Government. Bixiou was not an ordinary man in his hoaxes; he varied them with so much ingenuity that somebody was invariably taken in. He guessed every one's wishes; this was the secret of his success in this

line ; he knew the way to every castle in Spain ; and a man is easy to hoax through his day-dreams, because he is a willing accomplice. Bixiou would draw you out for hours together. And yet, though Bixiou was a profound observer, though he displayed extraordinary tact for purposes of quizzing, he could not apply his aptitude to the purpose of making other men useful to him, nor to the art of getting on in life. He liked best of all to torment La Billardiére junior, his pet aversion and nightmare ; but nevertheless he coaxed and flattered the young fellow the better to quiz him. He used to send him love letters signed "Comtesse de M——" or "Marquise de B——," making an appointment under the clock in the green-room of the opera at Shrovetide, and then after making a public exhibition of the young man he would let loose a grisette upon him. He made common cause with Dutocq (whom he regarded as a serious hoaxer) ; he made it a labor of love to support him in his detestation of Rabourdin and his praises of Baudoyer.

Jean Jacques Bixiou was the grandson of a Paris grocer. His father died as a colonel in the army, leaving the boy to the care of his grandmother, who had lost her husband and married one Descoings, her clerk. Descoings died in 1822. When Bixiou left school and looked about for some means of earning a livelihood, he tried art for a while ; but in spite of his friendship for Joseph Bridau, a friend of childhood, he gave up painting for caricatures, and vignettes, and the kind of work known twenty years afterward as book illustration. The influence of the Ducs de Maufrigneuse and de Rhétoré (whose acquaintance he made through opera-dancers) procured him his place in 1819. He was on the best of terms with des Lupeaulx, whom he met in society as an equal ; he talked familiarly to du Bruel ; he was a living proof of Rabourdin's observations on the continual process of destruction at work in the administrative hierarchy of Paris, when a man acquired personal importance outside the office. Short but well made,

small of feature, remarkable for a vague resemblance to Napoleon ; a young man of twenty-seven, with thin lips, a flat, perpendicular chin, fair hair, auburn whiskers, sparkling eyes, and a caustic voice—here you have Bixiou. All senses and intellect, he spoiled his career by an unbridled love of pleasure, which plunged him into continual dissipation. He was an intrepid man of pleasure ; he ran about after grisettes ; smoked, dined, and supped, and told good stories, everywhere adapting himself to his company, and shining behind the scenes at a grisettes' ball or the Allée des Veuves. At table or as one of a pleasure party Bixiou was equally astonishing ; he was equally alert and in spirits at midnight in the street, or at his first waking in the morning ; but, like most great comic actors, he was gloomy and depressed when by himself. Launched forth into a world of actors, actresses, writers, artists, and a certain kind of woman whose riches are apt to take wings, he lived well, he went to the theatre without payment, he played at Frascati's, and often won. He was, in truth, profoundly an artist, but only by flashes ; life for him was a sort of swing on which he swayed to and fro without troubling himself about the moment when the cord would break. Among people accustomed to a brilliant display of intellect, Bixiou was in great request for the sake of his liveliness and prodigality of ideas ; but none of his friends liked him. He could not resist the temptation of an epigram ; he sacrificed his neighbor on either hand at dinner before the first course was over. In spite of his superficial gayety, a certain secret discontent with his social position crept into his conversation ; he aspired to something better, and the fatal lurking imp in his character would not permit him to assume the gravity which makes so much impression on fools. He lived in chambers in the Rue de Ponthieu ; it was a regular bivouac ; the three rooms were given up to the disorder of a bachelor establishment. Often he would talk of leaving France to try a violent assault on fortune in America. No fortune-teller

could have predicted his future, for all his talents were incomplete ; he could not work hard and steadily ; he was always intoxicated with pleasure, always behaving as if the world were to come to an end on the morrow.

As to dress, his claim was that he was not ridiculous on that score ; and, perhaps, he was the one man in the department of whom it would not be said : " There goes a Government clerk ! " He wore elegant boots, black trousers with straps to them, a fancy vest, a cravat (the eternal gift of the grisette), a hat from Bandoni's, and dark kid gloves. His bearing was not ungraceful, being both easy and unaffected. So it came to pass that when summoned to hear a reprimand from des Lupeaulx, after carrying his insolence toward the Baron de la Billardiére a little too far, he was content to rejoin : " You would take me on again for the sake of my clothes. " And des Lupeaulx could not help laughing.

The most pleasing hoax ever perpetrated by Bixiou in the offices was devised for Godard's benefit. To him Bixiou presented a Chinese butterfly, which the senior clerk put in his collection, and exhibits to this day ; he has not yet found out that it is a piece of painted paper. Bixiou had the patience to elaborate a masterpiece for the sake of playing a trick upon the chief clerk's assistant.

The devil always provides a Bixiou with a victim. Baudoyer's office accordingly contained a butt, a poor copying clerk, aged two-and-twenty. Auguste-Jean-François Minard, for that was his name, was in receipt of a salary of fifteen hundred francs. He had married for love. His wife was a doorkeeper's daughter, an artificial flower-maker, who worked at home for Mlle. Godard. Minard had seen the girl in the store in the Rue de Richelieu. Zélie Lorain, in the days before her marriage, had many dreams of changing her station in life. She had been trained at the Conservatoire as dancer, singer, and actress by turns ; and often she had thought of doing as many other girls did, but the fear that things might

turn out badly for her, and she might sink to unspeakable depths, had kept Zélie in the paths of virtue. She was revolving all kinds of hazy projects in her mind when Minard came forward with his offer of marriage and gave them a definite shape. Zélie was earning five hundred francs a year; Minard had fifteen hundred. In the belief that two persons can live on two thousand francs, they were married without settlements and in the most economical fashion. The pair of turtle-doves found a nest on a fourth floor near the Barrière de Courcelles, at a rent of a hundred crowns. There was a very neat little kitchen, with a cheap plaid paper at fifteen sous the piece upon the walls, a brick floor assiduously beeswaxed and polished, walnut-wood furniture, and white India muslin curtains in the windows; there was a room in which Zélie made her flowers; a parlor beyond, with a round table in the middle, a looking-glass on the wall, a clock representing a revolving crystal fountain, dark haircloth chairs, and gilt candlesticks in gauze covers; and a blue-and-white bedroom, with a mahogany bedstead, a bureau, a bit of striped carpet at the bedfoot, half a dozen easy-chairs, four small chairs, and a little cherry-wood cot in the corner where the little ones, a boy and girl, used to sleep. Zélie nursed her children herself, did the cooking and the work of the house, and made her flowers. There was something touching in their happy, hard-working, unpretending comfort. As soon as Zélie felt that Minard loved her, she loved him with all her heart. Love draws love; it is the "deep calling unto the deep" of the Bible.

Minard, poor fellow, used to leave his wife asleep in bed in the morning and do her marketing for her. He took the finished flowers to the store on his way to the office of a morning, and bought the materials as he came home in the afternoon. Then, as he waited for dinner, he cut or stamped out the petals, made the stalks, and mixed the colors for her. The little, thin, slight, nervous man, with the curled chestnut

hair, clear hazel eyes, and dazingly fair but freckled complexion, possessed a quiet and unboasting courage below the surface. He could write as well as Vimeux. At the office he kept himself to himself, did his work, and maintained the reserve of a thoughtful man whose life is hard. Bixiou, the pitiless, nicknamed him "the white rabbit," on account of his white eyelashes and scanty eyebrows. Minard was a Rabourdin on a lower level. He was burning with a desire to put his Zélie in a good position; he wanted to make a fortune quickly, and to this end he was trying to hit upon an idea, a discovery, or an improvement in the ocean of Parisian industries and cravings for new luxury. Minard's seeming stupidity was the result of mental tension; he went from the Double Pâte des Sultanes to Cephalic Oil; from phosphorus boxes to portable gas; from hinged clogs to hydrostatic lamps, making the entire round of the infinitesimally small details of material civilization. He bore Bixiou's jests as a busy man bears with the buzzing of a fly; he never even lost his temper. And Bixiou, quickwitted though he was, never suspected the depth of contempt that Minard felt for him. Minard regarded a quarrel with Bixiou as a waste of time, and so at length he had tired out his persecutor.

Minard was very plainly dressed at the office; he wore trousers of duck till October, shoes and gaiters, a mohair vest, a beaver-cloth coat in winter and twill in summer, and a straw or silk hat according to the season, for Zélie was his pride. He would have gone without food to buy a new dress for her. He breakfasted at home with his wife, and ate nothing till he returned. Once a month he took Zélie to the theatre with a ticket given by du Bruel or Bixiou, for Bixiou did all sorts of things, even a kindness now and again. On these occasions Zélie's mother left her porter's room to look after the baby. Minard had succeeded to Vimeux's place in Baudoyer's office.

Mme. and M. Minard paid their calls in person on New Year's Day. People used to wonder how the wife of a poor

clerk on fifteen hundred francs a year could manage to keep her husband in a suit of black, and afford to drive in a hack, and to wear embroidered lawn dresses and silk petticoats, a Tuscan straw bonnet with flowers in it, prunella shoes, magnificent fichus, and a Chinese parasol; and yet be virtuous; while Mme. Colleville or such and such a "lady" could scarcely make both ends meet on two thousand four hundred francs.

Two of the clerks were friends to a ridiculous degree, for anything is matter for a joke in a Government office. One of these was the senior draughting clerk in Baudoyer's office; he had been chief clerk's assistant, and even chief clerk, for some considerable time during the Restoration. Colleville, for that was his name, had in Mme. Colleville a wife as much above the ordinary level in her way as Mme. Rabourdin in another. Colleville, the son of a first violin at the opera, had been smitten with the daughter of a well-known opera-dancer. Some clever and charming Parisiennes can make their husbands happy without losing their liberty; Mme. Colleville was one of these. She made Colleville's house a meeting-place for orators of the Chamber and the best artists of the day. People were apt to forget how humble a place Colleville occupied in his own house. Flavie was a little too prolific; her conduct offered such a handle to gossip that Mme. Rabourdin had refused all her invitations.

Colleville's friend, one Thuillier, was senior draughting clerk in Rabourdin's office; and while he occupied precisely the same position, his career in the service had been cut short for the same reasons. If any one knew Colleville, he knew Thuillier, and *vice versa*. It had so fallen out that they both entered the office at the same time, and their friendship arose out of this coincidence. Pretty Mme. Colleville (so it was said among the clerks) had not repulsed Thuillier's assiduities. Thuillier's wife had brought him no children. Thuillier, otherwise "Beau Thuillier," had been a lady-killer in his

youth, and now was as idle as Colleville was industrious. Colleville not only played the first clarionet at the Opera-Comique—he kept tradesmen's books in the morning before he went to the office, and worked very hard to bring up his family, although he did not lack influence. Others regarded him as a very shrewd individual, and so much the more so because he hid his ambitions under a semblance of indifference. To all appearance he was satisfied with his lot; he liked work; he found everybody, even to the chiefs themselves, inclined to aid so brave a struggle for a livelihood. Only recently, within the last few days in fact, Mme. Colleville had reformed her ways, and seemed to be tending toward religion; whereupon a rumor went abroad through the offices that the lady meant to betake herself to the Congregation in search of some more certain support than the famous orator François Keller, for his influence hitherto had failed to procure a good place for Colleville. Flavie had previously addressed herself (it was one of the mistakes of her life) to des Lupeaulx.

Colleville had a mania for reading the fortunes of famous men in anagrams made of their names. He would spend whole months in arranging and rearranging the letters to discover some significance in them. In *Révolution française*, he discovered *Un Corse la finira*;—*Vierge de son mari* in Marie de Vignerot, Cardinal de Richelieu's niece;—*Henrici mei casta dea* in Catharina de' Medicis;—*Eh! c'est large nez* in Charles Genest, the abbe whose big nose amused the Duc de Bourgogne so much at the Court of Louis XIV. All anagrams known to history had set Colleville wondering. He raised the play on words into a science; a man's fate (according to him) was written in a phrase composed of the letters of his name, style, and titles. Ever since Charles X. came to the throne he had been busy with that monarch's anagram. Thuillier maintained that an anagram was a pun in letters; but Thuillier was rather given to puns. Colleville, a man of generous nature, was bound by a well-nigh indissoluble friend-

ship to Thuillier, a pattern of an egoist ! It was an insoluble problem, though many of the clerks explained it by the observation that " Thuillier is well to do, and Colleville's family is a heavy burden ! "

And, truth to say, Thuillier was supposed to supplement his salary by lending money out at interest. Men in business often sent to ask to speak with him, and Thuillier would go down for a few minutes' talk with them in the courtyard ; but these interviews were undertaken on account of his sister, Mlle. Thuillier. The friendship thus consolidated by time was based upon events and attachments that came about naturally enough ; but the story has been given elsewhere,* and critics might complain of the tedious length of it if it were repeated. Still, it is perhaps worth while to point out that while a great deal was known in the offices as to Mme. Colleville, the clerks scarcely knew that there was a Mme. Thuillier. Colleville, the active man with a burdensome family of children, was fat, flourishing, and jolly ; while Thuillier, the " buck of the Empire," with his idle ways and no apparent cares, was slender in figure, haggard, and almost melancholy to behold.

" We do not know whether our friendships spring from our unlikeness or likeness to each other," Rabourdin would say, in allusion to the pair.

Chazelle and Paulmier, in direct contrast to the Siamese twins, were always at war with each other. One of them smoked, the other took snuff, and the pair quarreled incessantly as to the best way of using tobacco. One failing common to both made them equally tiresome to their fellow-clerks—they were perpetually squabbling over the cost of commodities, the price of green peas or mackerel, the amounts paid by their colleagues for hats, boots, coats, umbrellas, ties, and gloves. Each bragged of his new discoveries, and always kept them to himself. Chazelle collected booksellers'

* In " Les Petits Bourgeois."

prospectuses and pictorial placards and designs ; but he never subscribed to anything. Paulmier, Chazelle's fellow-chatter-box, went once to the great Dauriat to congratulate him on bringing out books printed on hot-pressed paper with printed covers, and bade him persevere in the path of improvements—and Paulmier had not a book in his possession ! Chazelle, being henpecked at home, tried to give himself independent airs abroad, and supplied Paulmier with endless gibes, while Paulmier, a bachelor, fasted as frequently as Vimeux himself, and his threadbare clothes and thinly disguised poverty furnished Chazelle with an inexhaustible text. Chazelle and Paulmier were both visibly increasing in waist girth ; Chazelle's small, rotund, pointed stomach had the impudence, according to Bixiou, to be always first ; Paulmier's fluctuated from right to left ; Bixiou had them measured once or so in a quarter. Both were between thirty and forty, and both were sufficiently vapid ; they did nothing after hours. They were specimens of your thoroughbred Government clerk—their brains had been addled with scribbling and long continuance in the service. Chazelle used to doze over his work, while the pen which he still held in his hand marked his breathings with little dots on the paper. Then Paulmier would say that Chazelle's wife gave him no rest at night. And Chazelle would retort that Paulmier had taken drugs for four months out of the twelve, and prophesy that a grisette would be the death of him. Whereupon Paulmier would demonstrate that Chazelle was in the habit of marking the almanac when Mme. Chazelle showed herself complaisant. By dint of washing their dirty linen in public, and flinging particulars of their domestic life at one another, the pair had won a fairly merited and general contempt. "Do you take me for a Chazelle?" was a remark that put an end to a wearisome discussion.

M. Poiret junior was so called to distinguish him from an elder brother who had left the service. Poiret senior had retired to the Maison Vauquer, at which boarding-house

Poiret junior occasionally dined, meaning likewise to retire thither some day for good. Poiret junior had been thirty years in the department. Every action in the poor creature's life was part of a routine; Nature herself is more variable in her revolutions. He always put his things in the same place, laid his pen on the same mark in the grain of the wood, sat down in his place at the same hour, and went to warm himself at the stove at the same minute; for his one vanity consisted in wearing an infallible watch, though he always set it daily by the clock of the Hôtel de Ville, which he passed on his way from the Rue du Martroi.

Between six and eight o'clock in the morning Poiret made up the books of a large dry goods store in the Rue Saint-Antoine; from six to eight in the evening he again acted as book-keeper to the firm of Camusot in the Rue des Bourdonnais. In this way he made an income of a thousand crowns a year, including his salary. By this time he was within a few months of his retirement upon a pension, and therefore treated the office intrigues with much indifference. Retirement had already dealt Poiret senior his death-blow; and probably when Poiret junior should no longer be obliged to walk daily from the Rue du Martroi to the office, to sit on his chair at a table and copy out documents daily, he too would age very quickly. Poiret junior collected back numbers of the "Moniteur" and of the newspaper to which the clerks subscribed. He achieved this with a collector's enthusiasm. If a number was mislaid, or if one of the clerks took away a copy and forgot to bring it back again, Poiret junior went forthwith to the newspaper office to ask for another copy, and returned delighted with the cashier's politeness. He always came in contact with a charming young fellow; journalists, according to him, were pleasant and little known people. Poiret junior was a man of average height, with dull eyes, a feeble, colorless expression, a tanned skin puckered into gray wrinkles with small bluish spots scattered over them, a snub

nose, and a sunken mouth, in which one or two bad teeth still lingered on. Thuillier used to say that it was useless for Poiret to look in the mirror, because he had lost his eye-teeth.*

His long, thin arms terminated in big hands without any pretension to whiteness; his gray hair, flattened down on his head by the pressure of his hat, gave him something of a clerical appearance; a resemblance the less welcome to him, because though he was not able to give an account of his religious opinions, he hated priests and ecclesiastics of every sort and description. This antipathy, however, did not prevent him from feeling an extreme attachment for the Government, whatever it might happen to be. Even in the very coldest weather, Poiret never buttoned his old-fashioned great-coat or wore any but laced shoes or black trousers. He had gone to the same stores for thirty years. When his tailor died, he asked for leave to go to the funeral, shook hands at the graveside with the man's son, and assured him of his custom. Poiret was on friendly terms with all his tradesmen; he took an interest in their affairs, chatted with them, listened to the tale of their grievances, and paid promptly. If he had occasion to write to make a change in an order, he observed the utmost ceremony, dating the letter, and beginning with "Monsieur" on a separate line; then he took a rough copy, and kept it in a pasteboard case, labeled "MY CORRESPONDENCE."

No life could be more methodical. Poiret kept every receipted bill, however small the amount; and all his private account books, year by year, since he came into the office, were put away in paper covers. He dined for a fixed sum per month at the same eating-house (the sign of the Sucking Calf, in the Place du Châtelet), and at the same table (the waiters

* *Parce qu'il ne se voyait pas dedans (de dents).* Here, as in many other instances, it is only possible to suggest in the English version that a pun has been made in the French.—TR.

used to keep his place for him); and as he never gave The Golden Cocoon, the famous silk-mercier's establishment, so much as five minutes more than the due time, he always reached the Café David, the most famous café in the Quarter, at half-past eight, and stayed there till eleven o'clock. He had frequented that café likewise for thirty years, and punctually took his *bavaroise* at half-past ten; listening to political discussions with his arms crossed on his walking-stick, and his chin on his right hand, but he never took part in them. The lady at the desk was the one woman with whom he liked to converse; to her ears he confided all the little events of his daily existence, for he sat at a table close beside her. Sometimes he would play at dominoes, the one game that he had managed to learn; but if his partners failed to appear, Poirot was occasionally seen to doze, with his back against the panels, while the newspaper frame in his hand sank down on the slab of marble before him.

Poirot took an interest in all that went on in Paris. He spent Sunday in looking round at buildings in course of construction; he would talk to the veteran who sees that no one goes inside the hoardings, and fret over the delays, the lack of money or of building materials, and other obstacles in the way of the architect. He was heard to say: "I have seen the Louvre rise from its ruins; I saw the first beginnings of the Place du Châtelet, the Quai aux Fleurs, and the Markets." He and his brother were born at Troyes; their father, a clerk of a farmer of taxes, had sent them both to Paris to learn their business in a Government office. Their mother brought a notorious life to a disastrous close; for the brothers learned to their sorrow that she died in the hospital at Troyes, in spite of frequent remittances. And not merely did they vow then and there never to marry, but they held children in abhorrence: they could not feel at ease with them; they feared them much as others might fear lunatics, and scrutinized them with haggard eyes. Drudgery had crushed all the life out of

them both in Robert Lindet's time. The Government had not treated them justly, but they thought themselves lucky to keep their heads on their shoulders, and only grumbled between themselves at the ingratitude of the administration—for they had "organized" the "Maximum!" When the before-mentioned trick was played upon Phellion, and his famous sentence was taken to Roubourdin for correction, Poiret took the draughting clerk aside into the rear corridor to say: "You may be sure, monsieur, that I opposed it with all my might."

Poiret had never been outside of Paris since he came into the city. He began from the first to keep a diary, in which he set out the principal events of the day. Du Bruel told him that Byron had done the same; the comparison overwhelmed Poiret with joy, and induced him to buy a copy of Chastopalli's translation of Byron's works, of which he understood not a word. At the office he was often seen in a melancholy attitude; he looked as if he were meditating deeply, but his mind was a blank. He did not know a single one of his fellow-lodgers; he went about with the key of his room in his pockets. On New Year's Day he left a card himself on every clerk in the division, and paid no visits.

Once, it was in the dog-days, Bixiou took it into his head to grease the inside of Poiret's hat with lard. Poiret junior (he was then fifty-two years of age) had worn the hat for nine whole years; Bixiou had never seen him in any other. Bixiou had dreamed of the hat of nights; it was before his eyes while he ate; and in the interests of his digestion, he made up his mind to rid the office of the unclean thing. Poiret junior went out toward four o'clock. He went his way through the streets of Paris, in a tropical heat, for the sun's rays were reflected back again from the walls and the pavement. Suddenly he felt that his head was streaming with perspiration; and he seldom perspired. Deeming that he was ill, or on the verge of an illness, he went home instead of repairing to the

Sucking Calf, took out his diary, and made the following entry :

“This day, July 3d, 1823, surprised by an unaccountable perspiration, possibly a symptom of the sweating sickness, a malady peculiar to Champagne. Incline to consult Dr. Haudry. First felt the attack by the Quai d'École.”

Suddenly, as he wrote bareheaded, it struck him that the supposed sweat arose from some external cause. He wiped his countenance and examined his hat ; but he did not venture to undo the lining, and could make nothing of it. Subsequently he made another entry in the diary :

“Took the hat to the *Sieur Tournan*, hatter in the *Rue Saint-Martin* ; seeing that I suspect that something else caused the sweat, which in that case would not be a sweat at all, but simply the effect of an addition of some kind, more or less recently made.”

M. Tournan immediately detected the presence of a fatty substance obtained by distillation from a hog or sow, and pointed it out to his customer. *Poiret* departed in a hat lent by *M. Tournan* till the new one should be ready for him ; but before he went to bed he added another sentence to his diary :

“It has been ascertained that my hat contained lard, otherwise hog's fat.”

The inexplicable fact occupied *Poiret's* mind for a fortnight ; he never could understand how the phenomenon had been brought about. There was talk at the office of showers of frogs and other canicular portents ; a portrait of *Napoleon* had been found in an elm-tree root ; all kinds of grotesque freaks of natural history cropped up. *Vimeux* told him one day that he,

Vimeux, had had his face dyed black by his hat, and added that hatters sold terrible trash. Poiret went several times after that to *Sieur Tournan's* to reassure his mind as to the processes of manufacture.

There was yet another clerk in *Rabourdin's* office. This personage avowedly had the courage of his opinions, professed the politics of the Left Centre, and worked himself into indignation over the unlucky white slaves in *Baudoyer's* office, and against that gentleman's tyranny. *Fleury* openly took in an Opposition sheet, wore a wide-brimmed gray felt hat, blue trousers with red stripes, a blue vest adorned with gilt buttons, and a double-breasted overcoat that made him look like a quartermaster in the gendarmes. His principles remained unshaken, and the administration nevertheless continued to employ him. Yet he prophesied evil of the Government if it persisted in mixing politics and religion. He made no secret of his predilection for *Napoleon*, especially since the great man's death made a dead letter of the law against all partisans of the "usurper." *Fleury*, ex-captain of a regiment of the line under the Emperor, a tall, fine, dark-haired fellow, was a money-taker at the *Cirque-Olympique*. *Bixiou* had never indulged in a caricature of him; for the rough trooper was not only a very good shot and a first-rate swordsman, but he appeared capable of going to brutal extremities upon occasion. *Fleury* was a zealous subscriber to "*Victoires et Conquêtes*;" but he declined to pay, and kept the issues as they appeared, basing his refusal upon the fact that the number stated in the prospectus had been exceeded.

He worshipped *M. Rabourdin*, for *M. Rabourdin* had interfered to save him from dismissal. A remark once escaped the ex-warrior, to the effect that if anything should come to *M. Rabourdin* through anybody else, he, *Fleury*, would kill that some one else; and *Dutocq* ever since went in such fear of *Fleury*, that he fawned upon him.

Fleury was overburdened with debts. He played his cred-

itors all kinds of tricks. Being expert in the law, he never by any chance put his name to a bill ; and as he himself had attached his salary in the names of fictitious creditors, he drew pretty nearly the whole of it. He had formed a very intimate connection with a super at the Porte Saint-Martin, and his furniture was removed to her house. So he played écarté joyously, and charmed social gatherings with his talents ; he could drink off a glass of champagne at a draught without moistening his lips, and he knew all Béranger's songs by heart. His voice was still fine and sonorous ; he allowed it to be seen that he was proud of it. His three great men were Napoleon, Bolivar, and Béranger. Foy, Lafitte, and Casimir Delavigne only enjoyed his esteem. Fleury, as you guess, was a man of the South ; he was pretty sure to end as the responsible editor of some Liberal paper.

Desroys was the mysterious man of the division. He rubbed shoulders with no one, talked little, and hid his life so successfully that no one knew where he lived, nor how he lived, nor whom his protectors were. Seeking a reason for this silence, some held that Desroys was one of the Carbonari, and some that he was an Orleanist ; some said that he was a spy, others that he was a deep individual. But Desroys was simply the son of a member of the Convention who had not voted for the King's death. Reserved and cold by temperament, he had formed his own conclusions of the world, and looked to no one but himself. As a Republican in secret, an admirer of Paul-Louis Courier, and a friend of Michel Chrestien's, he was waiting till time and the commonsense of the majority should bring about the triumph of his political opinions in Europe. Wherefore his dreams were of Young Germany and Young Italy. His heart swelled high with that unintelligent collective affection for the species, which must be called "humanitarianism," eldest child of a defunct philosophy, an affection which is to the divine charity of the Catholic religion as system is to art, as reasoning is to effort. This

conscientious political puritan, this apostle of an impossible Equality, regretted that penury forced him into the service of the Government; he was trying to get employment in some coach office. Lean and lank, prosy and serious, as a man may be expected to be if he feels that he may be called upon some day to give his head for the great object of his life, Desroys lived on a page of Volney, studied St. Just, and was engaged upon a rehabilitation of Robespierre, considered as a continuer of the work of Jesus Christ.

One more among these personages deserves a stroke or two of the pencil. This is little La Billardière. For his misfortune he had lost his mother. He had interest with the minister; he was exempt from the rough-and-ready treatment that he should have received from "la Place-Baudoyer;" and all the ministerial salons were open to him. Everybody detested the youth for his insolence and conceit. Heads of departments were civil to him, but the clerks had put him beyond the pale of good-fellowship with a grotesque politeness invented for his benefit. Little La Billardière was a tall, slim, weazened youth of two-and-twenty, with the manners of an Englishman; his dandy's airs were an affront to the office; he came to it scented and curled with impeccable collars and primrose-colored gloves, and a constantly renewed hat lining; he carried an eyeglass; he breakfasted at the Palais-Royal. A veneer of manner which did not seem altogether to belong to him covered his natural stupidity. Benjamin de la Billardière had an excellent opinion of himself; he had every aristocratic defect, and no corresponding graces. He felt quite sure of being "somebody," and had thoughts of writing a book; he would gain the cross as an author and set it down to his administrative talents. So he cajoled Bixiou with a view to exploiting him, but as yet he had not ventured to broach the subject. This noble heart was waiting impatiently for the death of the father who had but lately been made a baron. "The Chevalier de la Billardière" (so his name ap-

peared on his cards) had his armorial bearings framed and hung up at the office, to wit, *sable*, two swords saltire-wise, on a chief *azure*, three stars, and the motto: A TOUJOURS FIDÈLE. He had a craze for talking heraldry. Once he asked the young Vicomte de Portenduère why his arms were blazoned thus, and drew down upon himself the neat reply, "It was none of my doing." Little La Billardière talked much of his devotion to the Monarchy, and of the Dauphiness' graciousness to him. He was on very good terms with des Lupeaulx, often breakfasted with him, and believed that des Lupeaulx was his friend. Bixiou, posing as his Mentor, had hopes of ridding the division, and France likewise, of the young coxcomb by plunging him into dissipation; and he made no secret of his intentions.

Such were the principal figures in La Billardière's division. Some others there were beside which more or less approached these types in habits of life or appearance. Baudoyer's office boasted various examples of the genus clerk in diverse, bald-fronted, chilly mortals, with frames well wadded round with flannel. These individuals carried thorn-sticks, wore thread-bare clothes, and were never seen without an umbrella. They perched, as a rule, on sixth floors, and cultivated flowers at that height. Clerks of this type rank half-way between the prosperous janitor and the needy artisan; they are too far from the administrative centre to hope for any promotion whatsoever; they are pawns upon the bureaucratic chessboard. When their turn comes to go on guard, they rejoice to get a day away from the office. There is nothing that they will not do for extras. How they exist at all their very employers would be puzzled to say; their lives are an indictment against the State that assuredly causes the misery by accepting such a condition of things.

At sight of their strange faces it is hard to decide whether these quill-bearing mammals become cretinous at their task, or whether, on the other hand, they would never have under-

taken it if they had not been, to some extent, cretins from birth. Perhaps Nature and the Government may divide the responsibility between them. "Villagers," according to an unknown writer, "are submitted to the influences of atmospheric conditions and surrounding circumstances. They do not seek to explain the fact to themselves. They are in a manner identified with their natural surroundings. Slowly and imperceptibly the ideas and ways of feeling awakened by those surroundings will permeate their being and come to the surface of their lives, in their personal appearance and in their actions, with variations for each individual organization and temperament. And thus, if any student feels attracted to the little known and fruitful field of physiological inquiry, which includes the effects produced by external natural agents upon human character, for him the villager becomes a most interesting and trustworthy book." But for the employé, Nature is replaced by the office; his horizon is bounded upon all sides by green pasteboard cases. For him atmospheric influences mean the air of the corridors, the stuffy atmosphere of unventilated rooms where men are crowded together; and the odor of paper and quills. A floor of bare bricks or parquetry, bestrewn with strange litter, and besprinkled from the messenger's watering-can, is the scene of his labors; his sky is the ceiling, to which his yawns are addressed; his element is dust. The above remarks on the villager might have been meant for the clerk; he too is "identified" with his surroundings. The sun scarcely shines into the horrid dens known as public offices; the thinking powers of their occupants are strictly confined to a monotonous round. Their prototype, the mill-horse, yawns hideously over such work, and cannot stand it for long. And since several learned doctors see reason to dread the effects of such half-barbarous, half-civilized surroundings upon the mental constitution of human beings pent up among them, Rabourdin surely was profoundly right when he proposed to cut down the number of the staff, and asked

for heavy salaries and hard work for them. Men are not bored when they have great things to do.

As government offices are at present constituted, four hours out of the nine which the clerks are supposed to give to the State are wasted, as will presently be seen, over talk, anecdotes, and squabbles, and, more than all, over office intrigues. You do not know, unless you frequent government offices, how much the clerk's little world resembles the world of school; the similarity strikes you wherever men live together; and in the army or the law-courts you find the school again on a rather larger scale. The body of clerks, thus pent up for eight hours at a stretch, looked upon the offices as classrooms in which a certain amount of lessons must be done. The master on duty was called the head of the division; extra pay took the place of good-conduct prizes, and always fell to favorites. They teased and disliked each other, and yet there was a sort of good-fellowship among them—though, even so, it was cooler than the same feeling in a regiment; and in the regiment, again, it is not so strong as it is among schoolboys. As a man advances in life, egoism develops with his growth and slackens the secondary ties of affection. What is an office, in short, but a world in miniature?—a world with its unaccountable freaks, its friendships and hatreds, its envy and greed, its continual movement to the front? There, too, is the light talk that makes many a wound, and espionage that never ceases.

At this particular moment the whole division, headed by M. le Baron de la Billardière, was shaken by an extraordinary commotion; and, indeed, coming events fully justified the excitement, for heads of divisions do not die every day; and no tontine insurance association can calculate the probabilities of life and death with more sagacity than a government office. In government clerks, as in children, self-interest leaves no room for pity; but the clerk has hypocrisy in addition.

Toward eight o'clock Baudoyer's staff were taking their

places, whereas Rabourdin's clerks had scarcely begun to put in an appearance at nine; and yet the work was done much more quickly in the latter office. Dutocq had weighty reasons of his own for arriving early. He had stolen into the private office the night before, and detected Sébastien in the act of copying out papers for Rabourdin. He had hidden himself, and watched Sébastien go out without the papers; and then, feeling sure of finding a tolerably bulky rough draft and the fair copy, he had hunted through one pasteboard case after another, till at last he found the terrible list. Hurrying away to a lithographer's establishment, he had two impressions of the sheet taken off with a copying-press, and in this way became possessed of Rabourdin's own handwriting. Then, to prevent suspicion, he went to the office the first thing in the morning and put the rough draft back in the case. Sébastien had stayed till midnight in the Rue Duphot. In spite of his diligence, hatred was beforehand with him. Hatred dwelt in the Rue Saint-Louis-Saint-Honoré, whereas devotion lived in the Rue du Roi Doré in the Marais. Rabourdin was to feel the effect of that trivial delay through the rest of his life. Sébastien hurried to open the case, found all in order, and locked up the rough draft and unfinished copy in his chief's desk.

On a morning toward the end of December the light is usually dim; in our offices, indeed, they often work by lamp-light until ten o'clock. So Sébastien did not notice the mark of the stone on the paper; but at half-past nine, when Rabourdin looked closely at his draft, he saw that it had been submitted to some copying process; he was the more likely to see the traces of the slab, because of late he had been much interested in experiments in lithography, for he thought that a press might do the work of a copying clerk.

Rabourdin seated himself in his chair. So deeply was he absorbed in his reflections that he took the tongs and began to build up the fire. Then curious to know into what hands his secret had fallen, he sent for Sébastien.

"Did any one come to the office before you?"

"Yes; Monsieur Dutocq."

"Good. He is punctual. Send Antoine to me."

Rabourdin was too magnanimous to cause Sébastien needless distress by reproaching him now that the mischief was done. He said no more about it. Antoine came. Rabourdin asked if any of the clerks had stayed after four o'clock on the previous day. Antoine said that Monsieur Dutocq had stayed even later than Monsieur de la Roche. Rabourdin nodded, and resumed the course of his reflections.

"Twice I have prevented his dismissal," he said to himself, "and this is my reward!"

For Rabourdin that morning was to be the solemn crisis when great captains decide upon a battle after weighing all possible consequences. No one better knew the temper of the offices; he was perfectly aware that anything resembling espionage or tale-telling is no more pardoned by clerks than by schoolboys. The man that can tell tales of his comrades is disgraced, ruined, and traduced; ministers in such a case will drop their instrument. Any man in the service, under these circumstances, sends in his resignation—no other course is open to him; upon his honor there lies a stain that can never be wiped out. Explanations are useless—nobody wants them, nobody will listen to them. A cabinet minister in the like case is a great man; it is his business to choose men; but a mere subordinate is taken for a spy, no matter what his motives may be. Even while Rabourdin measured the emptiness of this folly, he saw the depths of it—saw, too, that he must sink. He was not so much overwhelmed as taken by surprise; so he sat pondering his best course of action in the matter, and knew nothing of the commotion caused in the offices by the news of the death of M. de la Billardiére till he heard of it through young de la Brière, who could appreciate the immense value of the chief clerk.

Meanwhile in the Baudoyers' office (for the clerks were

respectively known as the Baudoyers and the Rabourdins) Bixiou was giving the details of La Billardière's last moments for the benefit of Minard, Desroys, M. Godard (whom he had fetched out of his sanctum), and Dutocq. A double motive had sent the last-named individual hurrying over to the Baudoyers.

BIXIOU (*standing before the stove, holding first one boot and then the other to the fire to dry the soles*). "This morning at half-past seven I went to inquire after our worthy and revered director, Chevalier of Christ, et cætera. Et cætera? My goodness, I should think so, gentlemen; only yesterday the baron was a score of *et cæteras*, and now to-day he is nothing, not even a government clerk. I asked what sort of a night he had had. His nurse who does not die, but surrenders, told me that toward five o'clock this morning he had felt uneasy about the royal family. He got somebody to read over the names of those that had sent to make inquiries. Then he said, 'Fill my snuff-box, give me the newspaper, bring me my glasses, and change my ribbon of the Legion of Honor, for it is getting very dirty.' (He wears his orders in bed, you know.) So he was fully conscious, you see, quite in the possession of all his faculties and habitual ideas. But, pooh! ten minutes afterward the water had gone up, up, up; up to his heart and into his lungs. He knew he was dying when he felt the cysts break. At that supreme moment he showed what he was—how strong his character, his intellect how vast! Ah! some of us did not appreciate him. We used to laugh at him; we took him for a dunce; for the veriest dunce, did we not M. Godard?"

GODARD. "For my own part, nobody could have a higher opinion of Monsieur de la Billardière's talents than I."

BIXIOU. "You understood each other."

GODARD. "After all, 'twas not a spiteful man. He never did anybody harm."

BIXIOU. "A man must do something if he is to do harm,

and he never did anything. Then if it was not you that thought him hopelessly inept, it must have been Minard."

MINARD (*shrugging his shoulders*). "I?"

BIXIOU. "Well, then, it was you, Dutocq." (*As Dutocq makes signs of vehement protest.*) "What! you none of you thought so? Good! Everybody here, it seems, took him for an intellectual Hercules? Very well, you were right; he made an end like a man of talent, an intelligent man, a great man, as he was, in fact."

DESROYS (*growing impatient*). "Gracious me! what has he done that is so extraordinary? Did he make confession?"

BIXIOU. "Yes, sir, and expressed a wish to receive the sacraments. But do you know how he received them? He had himself put into a Court suit as gentleman in ordinary, he had all his orders, he even had his hair powdered; they tied up his queue (poor queue) with a new ribbon (and it is only a man of some character, I can tell you, that can mind his p's and queues when he lies a-dying; there are eight of us here, and not a single one of us could do it). And that is not all; you know that celebrated men always make a last 'speech'—that is the English word for a parliamentary gag—well, he said—what did he say now?—ah! yes; he said, 'I ought surely to put on my best to receive the King of Heaven, when I have so many times dressed within an inch of my life to pay my respects to an earthly sovereign!' Thus ended Monsieur de la Billardière; he might have done it on purpose to justify the saying of Pythagoras that 'we never know men until they are dead.'"

COLLEVILLE (*coming in*). "At last, gentlemen, I have a famous piece of news for you——"

OMNES. "We know it."

COLLEVILLE. "I defy you to guess it! I have been at this ever since his majesty's accession to the thrones of France and Navarre; and I finished it last night. It bothered me so

much that Madame Colleville wanted to know what it was that worried me so much."

DUTOCQ. "Do you suppose that anybody has time to think of your anagrams when the highly respected Monsieur de la Billardiére has just died?"

COLLEVILLE. "I recognize Bixiou's hand. I have only just been to Monsieur de la Billardiére's; he was still alive, but he is not expected to last long." (*Godard discovers that he has been hoaxed, and goes back in disgust to his sanctum.*) "But, gentlemen, you would never guess the events that lie in that sacramental phrase" (*holds out a paper*), "*Charles Dix, par la grâce de Dieu, roi de France et de Navarre.*"*

GODARD (*coming back*). "Out with it at once, and do not waste their time."

COLLEVILLE (*triumphantly, displays the folded end of the sheet*).

*A. H. V. il cedera
De S. C. l. d. partira
En nauf errera
Decede à Gorix.*

"All the letters are there: 'To H. V.' (Henri V.) 'he will yield' (his crown, that is); 'From S. C. l. d.' (Saint Cloud) 'he will set forth; On a bark' (that means a boat, skiff, vessel, whatever you like, it is an old French word), 'on a bark he will wander abroad——'"

DUTOCQ. "What a tissue of absurdities! How do you make it out that the King will resign his crown to Henri V., who, on your showing, would be his grandson, when there is his highness the Dauphin in between? You are prophesying the Dauphin's death anyhow."

BIXIOU. "What is Gorix? A cat's name?"

COLLEVILLE (*nettled*). "It is a lapidary's abbreviation of the name of a town, my dear friend; I looked it up in Malte-

* Charles X., by the grace of God, King of France and Navarre.

Brun. Gorix, the Latin *Gorixia*, is situated somewhere in Bohemia or Hungary; it is in Austria any way——”

BIXIOU (*interrupting*). “Tyrol, Basque provinces, or South America. You ought to have looked out an air at the same time so as to play it on the clarionet.”

GODARD (*shrugging his shoulders as he goes*). “What rubbish!”

COLLEVILLE. “Rubbish! rubbish! I should be very glad if you would take the trouble to study fatalism, the religion of the Emperor Napoleon.”

GODARD (*nettled by Colleville's tone*). “Monsieur Colleville, Bonaparte may be styled ‘Emperor’ by historians, but in a Government office he ought not to be recognized in that character.”

BIXIOU (*smiling*). “Find an anagram in that, my good friend. There! as for anagrams, I like your wife better. (*sotto voce*) She is easier to turn round. Flavie really ought to make you chief clerk at some odd moment when she has time to spare, if it were only to put you out of reach of a Godard’s stupidity——”

DUTOCQ (*coming to Godard's support*). “If it wasn’t all rubbish, you might lose your place, for the things you prophesy are not exactly pleasant for the King; every good Royalist is bound to assume that when he has been twice in exile he has seen enough of foreign parts.”

COLLEVILLE. “If they took away my post, François Keller would walk into your minister” (*deep silence*). “Know, Master Dutocq, that every known anagram has been fulfilled. Look here! don’t you marry, there is *coqu** in your name!”

BIXIOU. “And D T left over for ‘detestable.’”

DUTOCQ (*not apparently put out*). “I would rather it went no further than my name.”

PAULMIER (*aside to Desroys*). “Had you there, Master Colleville!”

* *Cocu*—cuckold.

DUTOCQ (*to Colleville*). "Have you done, *Xavier Rabourdin*, *chef de bureau*——"

COLLEVILLE. "Egad I have."

BIXIOU (*cutting a pen*). "And what did you make out?" he asked.

COLLEVILLE. "It makes this: *D'abord rêva bureaux, E. U.* Do you take it? *Et il eut fin riche*. Which means that after beginning in the civil service he chucked it over to make his fortune somewhere else."

DUTOCQ. "It is funny, anyhow."

BIXIOU. "And *Isidore Baudoyer*?"

COLLEVILLE (*mysteriously*). "I would rather not tell anybody but Thullier."

BIXIOU. "Bet you a breakfast I will tell you what it is!"

COLLEVILLE. "I will pay if you find out."

BIXIOU. "Then you are going to stand treat; but don't be vexed, two artists such as you and I will die of laughing. *Isidore Baudoyer* gives *Ris d'aboyeur d'oie*, he laughs at the fellow that barks at a goose."

COLLEVILLE (*thunderstruck*). "You stole it!"

BIXIOU (*stiffly*). "Monsieur Colleville, do me the honor to believe that I am so rich in folly that I have no need to steal from my neighbors."

BAUDOYER (*a letter-file in his hand*). "Talk just a little louder, gentlemen, I beg; you will bring the office into good odor. The estimable Monsieur Clergeot, who did me the honor to come to ask for some information, has had the benefit of your conversation" (*goes to Godard's office*).

DUTOCQ (*aside to Bixiou*). "I have something to say to you."

BIXIOU (*fingering Dutocq's waistcoat*). "You are wearing a neat waistcoat which cost you next to nothing, no doubt. Is that the secret?"

DUTOCQ. "What? Next to nothing? I never gave so much for a waistcoat before. The stuff costs six francs a yard

at the big store in the Rue de la Paix; it is a fine dull silk, just the thing for deep mourning."

BIXIOU. "You understand prints, but you do not know the rules of etiquette. One cannot know everything. Silk is not the proper thing to wear in deep mourning. That is why I only wear wool myself. Monsieur Rabourdin, Monsieur Clergeot, and the minister are all-wool; the Faubourg Saint-Germain is all-wool. Every one goes about in wool except Minard; he is afraid that people will take him for a sheep, styled *laniger* in rustical Latin; and on that pretext he dispensed with mourning for King Louis XVIII., a great legislator, a witty man, the author of the Charter, a king that will hold his own in history, as he held it everywhere else; for—do you know the finest touch of character in his life? No? Well, then, when he received all the allied sovereigns at his second entry, he walked out first to table."

PAULMIER (*looking at Dutocq*). "I do not see——"

DUTOCQ (*looking at Paulmier*). "No more do I."

BIXIOU. "You do not understand? Well, then; he did not regard himself as at home in his own house. It was ingenious, great, epigrammatic! The allied sovereigns understood it no more than you do, even when they put their heads together to make it out. It is true that they were pretty nearly all of them strangers——"

BAUDOYER (*in his assistant clerk's sanctum, where he has been conversing in an undertone beside the fire, while the talk went on outside*). "Yes, our worthy chief is breathing his last. Both ministers are there to receive his latest sigh; my father-in-law has just been informed of the event. If you wish to do me a signal service, take a cabriolet and go to Madame Baudoyer with the news; Saillard cannot leave his desk, and I dare not leave the office to look after itself. Put yourself at Madame Baudoyer's disposal; she has her own views, I believe, and might possibly wish to take several steps simultaneously" (*they go out together*).

GODARD. "Monsieur Bixiou, I am leaving the office for the day, so will you take my place?"

BAUDOYER (*looking benignly at Bixiou*). "You might consult me should occasion require it."

BIXIOU. "This time, La Billardière is really dead!"

DUTOQ (*whispers to Bixiou*). "Look here! Now is the time for coming to an understanding about getting on. Suppose that you are chief clerk and I assistant; what do you say?"

BIXIOU (*shrugging his shoulders*). "Come, no nonsense!"

DUTOQ. "If Baudoyer gets the appointment, Rabourdin will not stay on; he will send in his resignation. Between ourselves, Baudoyer is so incompetent that if you and du Bruel will not help him he will be cashiered in two months' time. If I can put two and two together, we have three vacant places ahead of us."

BIXIOU. "Three places that will be given away under our noses; they will go to swag-bellied toadies, flunkeys, spies, and men of the 'Congrégation;' to Colleville here, whose wife has gone the way of all pretty women, to—a devout ending."

DUTOQ. "It will go to you, my dear fellow, if for once in your life you care to employ your wits *consistently*" (*stopping short to note the effect of the adverb upon his listener*). "Let us be open and aboveboard."

BIXIOU (*imperturbably*). "What is your game?"

DUTOQ. "For my own part, I want to be chief clerk's assistant and nothing else. I know myself; I know that I have not the ability to be chief, and that you have. Du Bruel may get La Ballardière's place, and then you would be chief clerk under him. He will leave you his berth when he has feathered his nest; and as for me, with you to protect me, I shall potter along till I get my pension."

BIXIOU. "Sly dog. But how do you mean to bring this through? It is a matter of forcing a minister's hand and

spitting out a man of talent. Between ourselves, Rabourdin is the only man that is fit to take the division—the department, who knows? And you propose to put that square block of stupidity, that cube of incompetence, *La Place-Baudoyer*, in his stead?”

DUTOCQ (*bridling up*). “My dear fellow, I can set the whole place against Rabourdin! You know how Fleury loves him? Well and good, Fleury shall look down upon him.”

BIXIOU. “To be despised by Fleury!”

DUTOCQ. “Nobody will stand by him. The clerks will go in a body to the minister to complain of him; and not our division only, but Clergeot’s division and the Bois-Levants, all the departments in a mass.”

BIXIOU. “Just so; cavalry, infantry, artillery, and horse-marines, all to the front! You are off your head, my dear fellow! And what have I, for one, to do in this?”

DUTOCQ. “Draw a cutting caricature, a thing that a man cannot get over.”

BIXIOU. “Are you going to pay for it?”

DUTOCQ. “A hundred francs.”

BIXIOU (*to himself*). “There is something in it, then.”

DUTOCQ. “Rabourdin might be dressed as a butcher; but the likeness must be unmistakable. Find out points of resemblance between an office and a kitchen; put a larding-knife in Rabourdin’s hand; draw a lot of poultry, give them the heads of the principal clerks in the department, and put them in a huge coop with ‘Dispatch Department’ written over it, and Rabourdin must be supposed to be cutting their throats one after another. There should be geese, you know, and ducks with faces like ours; just a sort of a likeness, you understand! Rabourdin ought to have a fowl in his hand—Baudoyer, for example, got up as a turkey.”

BIXIOU. “‘Laughs at those that bark at a goose’” (*stares a long while at Dutocq*). “Did you think of this yourself?”

DUTOCQ. "Yes."

BIXIOU (*to himself*). "Violent hatred and talent, it seems, reach the same end!" (*To Dutocq*) "My dear fellow, I will do it" (*Dutocq starts with joy in spite of himself*) "if"—(*pause*)—"if I know whom I can look to to back me up; for if you do not succeed, I shall lose my berth, and I must live. And what is more, your good-nature is somewhat singular, my dear colleague."

DUTOCQ. "Well, do not make the drawing until success is plain to you——"

BIXIOU. "Why not make a clean breast of it at once, and tell me all?"

DUTOCQ. "I must scent out how things are in the offices first. We will talk of this again afterward" (*goes*).

BIXIOU (*left standing by himself in the corridor*). "That stock-fish (for he is more like a fish than a man), that Dutocq has got hold of a good idea, I do not know where he found it. It would be funny if *La Place-Baudoyer* got *La Billardiére's* place; it would be better than funny; we should get something by it." (*Goes back to the office.*) "Gentlemen, some famous changes will be seen here directly; Daddy *La Billardiére* is really dead this time. No humbug! Word of honor! There goes *Godard* post-haste on an errand for our revered chief, *Baudoyer*, heir-presumptive to the late lamented!" (*Minard, Desroys, and Colleville raise their heads and drop their pens in astonishment; Colleville blows his nose.*) "Some of us will get a step; *Colleville* is going to be assistant clerk at least; *Minard*, perhaps, will be first draughting clerk; why not? He is every bit as great a fool as I am. If you were raised to two thousand five hundred francs—eh, *Minard*!—your little wife would be finely pleased, and you might buy yourself a pair of boots."

COLLEVILLE. "But *you* have not two thousand five hundred francs yet."

BIXIOU. "Monsieur *Dutocq* gets as much as that in the

Rabourdins'. Why should not I within the year? So had Monsieur Baudoyer——"

COLLEVILLE. "That was through the Saillards' influence. Not a single draughting clerk gets so much in Clergeot's division."

PAULMIER. "By the way! Monsieur Cochin, may be, has not three thousand? He succeeded Monsieur Vavasseur, and Monsieur Vavasseur was here for ten years under the Empire on four thousand, he was cut down to three thousand on the first return of the Bourbons, and died on two thousand five hundred. But Monsieur Cochin's brother's influence raised it, and so he gets three."

COLLEVILLE. "Monsieur Cochin signs himself E. L. L. E. Cochin; his name is Emile-Louis-Lucien-Emmanuel, and his anagram gives *Cochenille*. Well, and he became a partner in a drug business in the Rue des Lombards, and the firm of Matifat made money by speculating in that particular colonial product."

BIXIOU. "Matifat, poor man, he had a year of Florine."

COLLEVILLE. "Cochin sometimes comes to our parties, for he is a first-rate performer on the violin." (*To Bixiou, who has not begun to work.*) "You ought to come to our concert next Tuesday. They will play a quartette by Reicha."

BIXIOU. "Thanks, I would rather look at the score."

COLLEVILLE. "Do you say that for a joke? For an artist of your attainments ought surely to be fond of music."

BIXIOU. "I am going, but it is for madame's sake."

BAUDOYER (*returning*). "Monsieur Chazelle not here yet? Give him my compliments, gentlemen."

BIXIOU (*who had put a hat on Chazelle's place as soon as he heard Baudoyer's footstep*). "Begging your pardon, monsieur, he has gone to make an inquiry of the Rabourdins for you."

CHAZELLE (*coming in with his hat on his head, misses seeing Baudoyer*). "Old La Billardiére has gone out, gentlemen!

Rabourdin is head of the division and master of requests ! He has fairly earned his step, he has !——”

BAUDOYER (*to Chazelle*). “You found the appointment in your second hat, sir, did you not ?” (*pointing to the hat on Chazelle's desk*.) “This is the third time this month that you have come in after nine o'clock ; if you keep it up, you will get on, but in what sense remains to be seen.” (*To Bixiou, who is reading a newspaper*.) “My dear Monsieur Bixiou, for pity's sake, leave the paper to these gentlemen (they are just going to take their breakfasts), and come and set about to-day's business. I do not know what Monsieur Rabourdin does with Gabriel ; he keeps him for his own private use, I suppose, for I have rung three times” (*disappears with Bixiou into Godard's office*).

CHAZELLE. “Cursed luck !”

PAULMIER (*delighted to tease Chazelle*). “So they did not tell you downstairs that he had gone up ? Anyhow, could you not use your eyes when you came in, and see the hat on your desk, and that elephant——”

COLLEVILLE (*laughing*) “—in the menagerie.”

PAULMIER. “You ought to have seen him—he is big enough.”

CHAZELLE (*desperately*). “Egad ! even if the Government pays us four francs seventy-five centimes per day, I do not see that we are slaves in consequence.”

FLEURY (*coming in at the door*). “Down with Baudoyer ! Long live Rabourdin ! That is the cry all through the division.”

CHAZELLE (*lashing himself into fury*). “Baudoyer is welcome to cashier me if he has a mind ; I shall be no worse off than before. There are a thousand ways of earning five francs a day in Paris ; you can make *that* at the Palais by copying for the lawyers——”

PAULMIER. “So you say, but a berth is a berth ; and Colleville, that courageous fellow who works like a galley-

slave after hours, and might make more than his salary if he lost his post by giving music lessons—he will keep his berth. Hang it all, a man does not throw up his chances.”

CHAZELLE (*continuing his philippic*). “He may, not I. We haven’t any chance to lose. Confound it! There was a time when nothing was more tempting than a career in the civil service; there were so many men in the army that they were wanted in the administration. The maimed and the halt, toothless old men, unhealthy fellows like Paulmier, and short-sighted people got on rapidly. The lycées swarmed with boys, and families were dazzled with the brilliant prospect. A young fellow in spectacles wore a blue coat and a red ribbon blazing at his button-hole, and drew a thousand or so of francs every month for spending a few hours every day at some office looking after something or other. He went late and came away early; he had hours of leisure, like Lord Byron, and wrote novels; he strolled in the Tuileries gardens with a bit of a swagger; he was on exhibition at balls and theatres and everywhere else; he was admitted into the best society; he spent his salary, returning to France all that France gave him, and even doing something in return. In those days, in fact, employés (like Thuillier) were petted by pretty women; they were supposed to be intelligent, and by no means overworked themselves at the office. Empresses, queens, and princesses had their fancies in those happy days. All those noble ladies had the passion of noble natures—they loved to play the protector. So there was a chance of filling a high position in twenty-five years or so; you might be auditor to the Council of State; or a master of requests, and draw up reports for the Emperor, while you amused yourself with his august family. People used to work and play at the same time. Everything was done quickly. But nowadays, since the Chamber bethought itself of entering the expenditure under separate items, and the heading ‘STAFF,’ we are not even like private soldiers. It is a thousand to one if

you get the smallest appointment, for there are a thousand sovereigns——”

BIXIOU (*returning*). “Chazelle must be crazy. Where does he discover a thousand sovereigns? Are they by any chance in his pocket?——”

CHAZELLE. “Let us reckon them up! Four hundred at the farther end of the Pont de la Concorde (so called because it leads to perpetual discord between the Right and the Left in the Chamber); three hundred more at the top of the Rue de Tournon. So the Court, which ought to count for three hundred, is obliged to have seven hundred times the Emperor’s strength of will, if it means to give any place whatsoever by patronage——”

FLEURY. “Which all means that, if a clerk has no interest and no one to help him but himself in a country where there are three centres of power, the betting is a thousand to one that he will never get any further.”

BIXIOU (*looking from Fleury to Chazelle*). “Aha! my children, you have yet to learn that to be in the service of the State is to be in the worst state of all——”

FLEURY. “Because there is a properly instituted constitutional Government.”

COLLEVILLE. “Gentlemen! let us not talk politics.”

BIXIOU. “Fleury is right. If you serve the State in these days, gentlemen, you do not serve a prince who rewards and punishes. The State is Anybody and Everybody. Now, Everybody cares for Nobody. If you serve Everybody, you serve Nobody; and Nobody cares about Anybody. A civil servant lives between these two negatives. The world is pitiless, heartless, brainless, and thoughtless; Everybody is selfish, Everybody forgets the services of yesterday. You are (like Monsieur Baudoyer) an administrative genius from a most tender age; you are the Chateaubriand of reports, the Bossuet of circulars, the Canalis of memorials, the ‘sublime child’ of the dispatch—in vain! There is a disheartening

law against administrative genius; the law of advancement on the average.

“That fatal average is worked out from the tables of the law of promotion and the tables of mortality. It is certain that if you enter any department whatsoever at the age of eighteen, you will not have a salary of eighteen hundred francs till you are thirty years old; if you are to get six thousand by the time you are fifty, Colleville’s career proves that though you have a genius for a wife, and the support of various peers of France, and of divers influential deputies to boot, it profiteth you nothing. Let a young man have studied the humanities, let him be vaccinated, exempt from military service, and in full possession of his wits; well, there is no free and independent career in which, without a transcendent intellect, such a man could not put by a capital of forty-five thousand francs of centimes in the time. That sum would bring in a yearly interest equal to our salary, and it would be a perpetual income; whereas our salaries are by their nature transitory, we have not even our berths, such as they are, for life. In the same time, a tradesman would have money put out to interest, and an independent income of ten thousand francs; he would have filed his schedule, or he would be a president of the Commercial Court. A painter would have covered a square mile of canvas with paint; he would either wear the cross of the Legion of Honor or set up for a neglected genius. A man of letters would be a professor of something or other; or a journalist, paid at the rate of a hundred francs for a thousand lines; or he is a *feuilletonniste*, or some fine day he is landed in Saint-Pélagie for writing a luminous pamphlet which displeased the jesuits; his value incontinently goes up tremendously, and the pamphlet makes a political personage of him. Indeed, your idler that never did anything in his life (for there are idlers that do something and idlers that do nothing), your idler has made debts and found a widow to pay them. A priest has had time to

become a bishop *in partibus*. A vaudevilliste is a landed proprietor, even if, like du Bruel, he never wrote a whole vaudeville by himself. If a steady, intelligent young fellow starts in the money-lending line with a very small capital (like Mademoiselle Thuillier, for instance), he can buy a fourth of a stockbroker's connection in twelve years. Let us go lower down ! A petty clerk becomes a notary ; the ragpicker has a thousand crowns of independent income ; the workingman at worst has managed to set up for himself ; whereas, in the midst of the rotatory movement of that civilization which takes infinite subdivision for progress, a Chazelle has been existing on twenty-two sous per head. He argues with his tailor and shoemaker, he is in debt ; that's nothing—he is *cretinized* ! Come, gentlemen, one glorious movement ; let us send in our resignations in a body, hey ? Fleury and Chazelle, make a plunge into a new line, and become great men in it !——”

CHAZELLE (*calming down under Bixiou's discourse*). “Thanks” (*general laughter*).

BIXIOU. “You are wrong. In your position I would be beforehand with the secretary-general.”

CHAZELLE (*uneasily*). “Why, what has he to say to me ?”

BIXIOU. “Odry would tell you, Chazelle, with more charm in the manner of the telling than des Lupeaulx will put into the observation, that the one place open to you is the Place de la Concorde.”

PAULMIER (*clasping the stove-pipe*). “Egad ! Baudoyer will not have pity on you, that is certain !”

FLEURY. “Another thing to put up with from Baudoyer. Now, there's a queer fish for you ! Talk of Monsieur Rabourdin—there is a man ! The work he put on my table to-day would take three days in this office, but he will have it by four o'clock this afternoon. But *he* is not always at my heels to stop my chat with friends.”

BAUDOYER (*returning*). “Gentlemen, if anybody has a right to find fault with the parliamentary system or the proceed-

ings of the administration, you must admit that this is not the proper place for such talk." (*To Fleury.*) "Why are you here, sir?"

FLEURY (*insolently*). "To advise these gentlemen of a general move! The secretary-general has sent for du Bruel; Dutocq has gone too. Everybody is wondering about the appointment."

BAUDOYER (*returning*). "That, sir, is no business of yours. Go back to your office, and do not upset mine."

FLEURY (*from the doorway*). "It would be tremendously unfair if Rabourdin were to be done out of it. My word! I would leave the service." (*Comes back.*) "Did you make out your anagram, Daddy Colleville?"

COLLEVILLE. "Yes, here it is."

FLEURY (*leaning over Colleville's desk*). "Famous! famous! It will be sure to happen if the Government keeps to its hypocritical line." (*Gives warning to the others that Baudoyer is listening.*) "If the Government openly stated its intentions without an afterthought, then the Liberals would see what they would have to do. But when a Government sets its best friends against it, and sends such men as Chateaubriand and Royer-Collard and the 'Débats' into opposition, it makes you sorry to see it."

COLLEVILLE (*after a look round at his fellow-clerks*). "Look here, Fleury, you are a good fellow, but you must not talk politics here. You do us more harm than you know."

FLEURY (*drily*). "Good-day, gentlemen. I will go to my copying." (*Comes back and speaks to Bixiou in an undertone.*) "They say that Madame Colleville is making allies among the Congrégation."

BIXIOU. "In what way?—"

FLEURY (*breaking into a laugh*). "You are never to be caught napping!"

COLLEVILLE (*uneasily*). "What are you saying?"

FLEURY. "Our theatre took a thousand crowns yesterday

with the new piece, though this is its fortieth representation. You ought to come and see it. The scenery is something superb."

Meanwhile, des Lupeaulx was giving du Bruel audience in the secretary's rooms; and Dutocq had followed du Bruel. Des Lupeaulx's man brought the news of M. de la Billardiére's death, and the secretary-general intended to please both ministers by inserting an obituary notice in that evening's paper.

"Good-day, my dear du Bruel," was the semi-minister's greeting, as he saw the clerk enter, and left him to stand. "You know the news? La Billardiére is dead; the two ministers were present when he took the sacrament. The old man strongly recommended Rabourdin; said that he could not die easy unless he knew that his successor was to be the man who had filled his place all along. It would seem that the death-agony is like the 'question,' and everything comes out. The minister is so much the more pledged to this course because it is his intention, and the intention of the Board likewise, to reward Monsieur Rabourdin's numerous services" (wagging his head)—"the Council of State desires the benefit of his lights. They say that Monsieur de la Billardiére is to be transferred to the Seals, which is as good as if the King had made him a present of a hundred thousand francs—the place is like a notary's connection, and may be sold. That piece of news will be received with joy in your division, for they might imagine that Benjamin would be put in there. Du Bruel, some one ought to knock off ten or a dozen lines about the old boy, by way of a news item. It will come under the notice of their excellencies.

"Do you know all about old La Billardiére?" he added, taking up the papers.

Du Bruel made a gesture to signify that he knew nothing.

"No?" returned des Lupeaulx. "Oh, well, he was mixed up in the La Vendée business; he was in the late King's confidence. Like Monsieur le Comte de la Fontaine, he never

would come to terms with the First Consul. He did a little in Chouannerie. He was born in Brittany of a parliamentary family ; but their dignities were so recent that he was ennobled by Louis XVIII. See—how old was he now? Never mind. Just put it properly something this way: ‘A loyalty that never swerved, an enlightened piety’—(the poor old boy had a craze for never setting foot in a church). Give him out for a pious servant of the Crown. Lead up nicely to the remark that he might have sung the Song of Simeon over the accession of Charles X. The Comte d’Artois had a great esteem for him, for La Billardiére unfortunately coöperated with him in the Quiberon affair, and took all the blame upon himself; you know, of course. La Billardiére justified the King in a pamphlet which he wrote to refute an impertinent History of the Revolution gotten up by some journalist. So you can lay stress on the devotion. Finally, weigh your words well, so that the other papers may not laugh at us, and bring me the article. Were you at Rabourdin’s yesterday?”

“Yes, my lord,” said du Bruel, “that is—I beg pardon——”

“There is no harm done,” des Lupeaulx answered, laughing.

“His wife is delightfully pretty,” continued du Bruel. “There are not two such women in Paris. There are women as clever, but they are not so charming in their cleverness; and there may be a woman as handsome as Célestine, but scarcely one so various in her beauty. Madame Rabourdin is far superior to Madame Colleville!” added du Bruel, for he remembered an old story about des Lupeaulx. “Flavie is what she is, thanks to her intercourse with men, while Madame Rabourdin owes everything to herself; she knows everything; you could not tell a secret in Latin before her. I should think that nothing was beyond my reach if I had such a wife.”

“You have more brains than an author’s allowance,” re-

turned des Lupeaulx in a thrill of gratified vanity. And, turning his head, he saw Dutocq.

"Oh! good-day, Dutocq. I sent to ask if you would lend me your Charlet, if it is complete. The countess knows nothing of Charlet."

Du Bruel withdrew.

"Why do you come when you are not called?" des Lupeaulx asked in a hard voice, when they were alone. "Why do you come to me at ten o'clock, just as I am about to breakfast with his excellency? Is the Government in danger?"

"Perhaps, sir. If I had had the honor of an interview with you this morning, you certainly would not have pronounced the *Sieur Rabourdin's* panegyric after you had read what he has written of you."

Dutocq unbuttoned his greatcoat and took out a quire of paper, with an impression on the side of the sheets. He laid them down on des Lupeaulx's desk and pointed to a paragraph. Then he bolted the door, as though he feared an explosion. This was what the secretary-general read against his name:

"M. DES LUPEAULX.—A Government lowers itself by employing such a man openly. His proper place is in the diplomatic police. Such a person may be pitted with success against the political buccaneers of other cabinets. It would be a pity to put him into the ordinary police. He stands above the level of the common spy; he can grasp a scheme, he could carry out a necessary bit of dirty work successfully, and cover his retreat with skill," and so forth and so forth. Des Lupeaulx's character was succinctly analyzed in five or six sentences. Rabourdin gave the gist of the biographical sketch at the beginning of this history.

At the first words the secretary-general knew that he had been weighed and found wanting by an abler man; but he determined to reserve himself for a further examination into

a piece of work which went both high and far, without admitting such a man as Dutocq into his confidence. The secretary-general, like barristers, magistrates, diplomatists, and others, was obliged to explore the human heart; like them, too, he was astonished at nothing. He was accustomed to treachery, to the snares set by hate, to traps of all kinds. He could receive a stab in the back without a change of countenance. So it was a calm and grave face that des Lupeaulx turned upon the office spy.

"How did you get hold of this document?" he asked.

Dutocq gave the history of his good luck; but des Lupeaulx's face showed no sign of approval while he listened. Consequently the story begun in high triumph was ended in fear and trembling.

"You have put your finger between the tree and the bark, Dutocq," was the secretary-general's dry comment. "Observe the utmost secrecy as to this affair, unless you want to make very powerful enemies; it is a work of the greatest importance, and I have cognizance of it."

And des Lupeaulx dismissed Dutocq with a glance of that kind which speaks more than words.

Dutocq was dismayed to find a rival in his chief. "Aha!" he said to himself, "so that scoundrel of a Rabourdin is in it too. He is a staff-officer, while I am a private soldier. I would not have believed it."

So to all his previous motives for detesting Rabourdin was added another and most cogent reason for hate—the jealousy that one workman feels of another in the same trade.

When des Lupeaulx was left alone his meditations took a singular turn. Rabourdin was an instrument in the hands of some power; what power was it? Should he profit by this surprising document to ruin the man? Or should he use it the better to succeed with the man's wife? The mystery was perfectly obscure. Des Lupeaulx turned the pages in dismay. The men whom he knew were summed up with unheard-of

sagacity. He admired Rabourdin, while he felt the stab to the heart. He was still reading when breakfast was announced.

"You will keep his excellency waiting if you do not go down at once," the minister's footman came to say.

The minister breakfasted with his wife and children and des Lupeaulx. There were no servants in the room. The morning meal is the one moment of home life that a statesman can snatch from the all-absorbing demands of public business; but in spite of the barriers raised with ingenious care, so that one hour may be given up entirely to the family and the affections, many intruders, great and small, find ways of breaking in upon it. Public business, as at this moment, often comes athwart their enjoyment.

"I thought Rabourdin was above the ordinary level of clerks; and lo and behold! ten minutes after La Billardière's death, he takes it into his head to send me a regular stage billet through La Brière," said the minister, and he held out the sheet of paper which he was twisting in his fingers.

Rabourdin had written the note before he heard of M. de la Billardière's death through La Brière; he was too noble-minded to think of the base construction that might be put upon it, and allowed La Brière to retain and deliver the missive.

Des Lupeaulx read as follows:

"MONSEIGNEUR:—If twenty-three years of irreproachable service may merit a favor, I entreat your excellency to grant me an audience this very day. It is a matter in which my honor is involved," and the note ended with the usual respectful formulas.

"Poor man!" said des Lupeaulx, in a pitying tone, which left the minister still under a misapprehension; "we are by ourselves, let him come. You go to the Council after the House rises, and your excellency is bound to give an answer

to the Opposition to-day ; this is the only time that you can give him——”

Des Lupeaulx rose, sent for the usher, said a word to him, and came back to the table.

“I am adjourning him to the dessert,” said he.

His excellency, like most other ministers under the Restoration, was past his youth. The Charter granted by Louis XVIII., unluckily, tied the King's hands ; he was forced to give the destinies of the country over to quadragenarians of the Chamber of Deputies and peers of seventy. A king had not power to look wheresoever he would for an able political leader, and to put him forward in spite of his youth or poverty. Napoleon, and Napoleon alone, might employ young men if he chose ; no considerations led him to pause. And so it fell out that since the fall of that mighty Will, energy had deserted authority. And in France, of all countries in the world, the contrast between slackness and vigor is a dangerous one. As a rule, the minister who comes into power late in life, is a mediocrity ; while young ministers have been the glory of European kingdoms and Republics. The world is ringing yet with the contest between Pitt and Napoleon ; and they, like Henri IV., like Richelieu, Mazarin, Colbert, Louvois, the Prince of Orange, the Duc de Guise, Francesco della Rovere, and Machiavelli, like all great statesmen, in short, whether they come of low origin or are born to a throne, began to govern at an early age. The Convention, that model of energy, was in great part composed of young heads ; and no sovereign can afford to forget that the Convention brought fourteen armies into the field against Europe ; the policy that brought about such disastrous results for absolute power (as it is called) was none the less dictated by true monarchical principles, and the Convention bore itself as a great king.

After ten or twelve years of parliamentary strife, after going again and again over the same ground till he grew jaded, this particular minister had been, in truth, put in office by a party

which regarded him as its man of business. Fortunately for him, he was nearer sixty than fifty years old ; if he had shown any signs of youthful energy, he would have come promptly to grief. But being accustomed to give way, to beat a retreat, and return to the charge, he could stand against the blows dealt him by all and sundry, by the Opposition or by his own side, by the Court or the clergy ; opposing to it all the *vis inertiae* of a soft but unyielding substance. In short, he enjoyed the advantages of his misfortune. Like some old barrister that has pleaded every conceivable cause, he had passed through the fire on countless questions of Government, till his mind no longer retained the keen edge preserved by the solitary thinker ; and he lacked that faculty of making prompt decisions, which is acquired early in a life of action, and more especially in a military career. How should he have been other than he was ? All his life long he had juggled with questions instead of using his own judgment upon them ; he had criticised effects without going into the causes ; and beside, and above all this, his head was full of the endless reforms which a party thrusts upon its leader ; he was burdened with programmes designed to gain the private ends of various personages ; for if an orator has a future before him, he is sure to be embarrassed with all kinds of impracticable schemes and unpractical advice. So far from starting fresh, the minister was jaded and tired with marches and counter-marches. And when at last he reached the long-desired heights, he found his paths beset with thorns on every side, and a thousand contrary dispositions to be reconciled. If the statesmen of the Restoration could but have followed out their own ideas, their capacities would no doubt be less exposed to criticism ; but while their wills were overruled, their age was the salvation of them ; they were physically incapable of contending, as younger men would have done, with low intrigue in high places, intrigues which sometimes proved too much even for the strength of a Richelieu. To such knavery in a lower

sphere Rabourdin was about to fall a victim. To the throes of early struggles succeeded the throes of office, for men not so much old as aged before the time. And so, just as they needed the keen sight of the eagle, their eyes were growing dim; and their faculties were exhausted when their work called for redoubled vigor.

The minister to whom Rabourdin meant to confide his scheme was accustomed to hear the most ingenious theories propounded to him daily by men of unquestioned ability; schemes more or less applicable, or inapplicable, to public business in France were brought continually before his eyes. Their promoters had not the remotest conception of the difficulties of general policy; they used to waylay the minister on his return from a pitched battle in the House, or a struggle with folly behind the scenes at Court; they assailed him on the eve of a wrestling-bout with public opinion, or on the morrow of some diplomatic question on which the Cabinet had split in three. A statesman thus situated naturally has a gag ready to apply at the first hint of an improvement in the established order of things. Daring speculators and men from behind the scenes in politics or finance were not wont to meet round a dinner-table in those days to sum up the opinions of the Stock Exchange and the Money Market, together with some utterance let fall by Diplomacy, in one profound saying. The minister had, however, a sort of privy council in his privy secretary and secretary-general; they chewed the cud of reflection, and controlled and analyzed the interests that spoke through so many insinuating voices.

It was the minister's unfortunate habit (the invariable habit of sexagenarian ministers) to shuffle out of difficulties. No question was fairly faced; the Government was quietly trying to gag journalism instead of striking openly; it was evading the financial question; temporizing with the clergy as with the National Property difficulty, with Liberalism as with the control of the Chamber. Now as the minister in

seven years had outflanked the powers that be, he considered that he could come round every question in the same way. It was natural that a man should try to keep his position by continuing to use the methods by which he rose ; so natural, that nobody ventured to criticise a system devised by mediocrity to please mediocrity. The Restoration (like the revolution in Poland) clearly showed how much a great man is worth to a nation, and what happens if he is not forthcoming. The last and greatest defect of the Restoration statesmen was their honesty, for their opponents availed themselves of slander and lies and all the resources of political rascality, until, by the most subversive methods, they let loose the unintelligent masses ; and the large body of the people are quick to grasp but one idea—the idea of riot.

All this Rabourdin had told himself. Still, he had decided to hazard all to win all, much as a jaded gamester agrees with himself to try but one more throw ; and fate, meanwhile, sent him a trickster for his opponent in the shape of des Lupeaulx. And yet, however sagacious Rabourdin might be, he was better skilled in administrative work than in parliamentary perspective. He did not imagine the whole truth ; it had not occurred to him that the great practical work of his life was about to become a theory for the minister, or that a statesman would inevitably class him with after-dinner innovators and armchair reformers.

His excellency had just risen from the table. He was thinking not of Rabourdin, but of François Keller. His wife detained him by offering him a bunch of grapes, when the chief clerk was announced. Des Lupeaulx had reckoned upon this preoccupied mood ; he knew that his excellency's mind would be taken up by his "extempore" speeches ; so, seeing that the minister was engaged in a discussion with his wife, the secretary-general came forward. Rabourdin was thunderstruck by the first words.

"We, his excellency and I, have been informed of the

work in which you are engaged," said des Lupeaulx, lowering his voice; "you have nothing to fear from Dutocq, or from any one whatever," he added, speaking the last few words aloud.

"Do not worry yourself in any way, Rabourdin," his excellency said kindly, but he made as though he would retreat.

Rabourdin came forward respectfully, and the minister could not choose but remain.

"Will your excellency condescend to permit me to say a few words in private?" said Rabourdin, with a significant glance.

The minister looked at the clock, then he went toward a window, and Rabourdin followed him.

"When may I have the honor of submitting the affair to your excellency, so that I may explain the scheme of administration to which that paper relates! It is sure to be used to sully——"

"A scheme of administration," the minister broke in, knitting his brows as he spoke. "If you have anything of the kind to lay before me, wait till the day when we work together. I have to attend the Council to-day, and I must make a reply to a question raised by the Opposition yesterday just before the House rose. Next Friday is your day; we did no work yesterday, for I had no time to attend to the business of the department. Political affairs stood in the way of purely administrative business."

"I leave my honor with confidence in your excellency's hands," Rabourdin answered gravely, "and I beg of you to remember that I was not permitted to offer an explanation of the missing document at once——"

"Why, you need fear nothing," broke in des Lupeaulx, as he came between them; "you are sure of your nomination in a week's time——"

The minister began to laugh; he remembered des Lupeaulx's

enthusiasm over Mme. Rabourdin, and looked slyly at his wife. The countess smiled. This by-play surprised Rabourdin; he wondered what it meant; for a moment he ceased to hold the minister with his eye, and his excellency took the opportunity of escape.

"We will have a chat together over all this," said des Lupeaulx, when Rabourdin, not without bewilderment, found himself alone with the secretary-general. "But do not bear malice against Dutocq; I will answer for him."

"Madame Rabourdin is a charming woman," put in the countess, for the sake of saying something.

The children gazed curiously at the visitor. Rabourdin had been prepared for a great ordeal; now he felt as if he were a big fish taken in the toils of a fine net. He struggled with himself.

"Madame la Comtesse is very kind," he said.

"May I not have the pleasure of seeing you on one of my Fridays?" continued the lady; "bring your wife to us, you will do me a favor——"

"That is Madame Rabourdin's night," put in des Lupeaulx, knowing what official Fridays were like; "but since you are so good, you are giving a small evening party soon, I believe——"

The minister's wife seemed annoyed.

"You are the master of the ceremonies," she said, addressing des Lupeaulx as she rose.

In those ambiguous words she expressed her vexation; des Lupeaulx was intruding guests upon one of her small parties, to which none but a select few were admitted. Then, with a curtsey to Rabourdin, she went, and des Lupeaulx and the chief clerk were left alone in the little breakfast-room. Des Lupeaulx was crumpling a bit of paper between his fingers; Rabourdin recognized his own confidential note.

"You do not really know me," the secretary-general began with a smile. "On Friday evening we will come to a thor-

ough understanding. I am bound to give audience now ; the minister is putting everything on my shoulders to-day, for he is preparing for the Chamber. But, Rabourdin, you have nothing to fear, I repeat."

Slowly Rabourdin made his way downstairs. He was bewildered by the unexpected turn that things were taking. He believed that Dutocq had denounced him ; he was not mistaken ; the list in which des Lupeaulx was so severely criticised was now in the hands of that worthy, and yet des Lupeaulx was flattering his judge. It was hopelessly bewildering. Straightforward people find it hard to see their way through a maze of intrigue, and Rabourdin lost himself in a labyrinth of conjecture, but failed to understand the secretary-general's game.

"Either he has not read the article upon himself or he is in love with my wife !"

These were the thoughts that brought him to a stand as he crossed the courtyard ; and the glance exchanged between Célestine and des Lupeaulx, and intercepted last night, flashed like lightning upon his memory.

During Rabourdin's absence his office had, of course, suffered from a sudden accession of vehement excitement ; the relations between the upper powers and subordinates are very much laid down by rule ; and great, therefore, was the comment when an usher appeared from his excellency to ask for the chief clerk, especially as he came at an hour when ministers are invisible. As this extraordinary communication coincided, moreover, with the death of M. de la Billardiére, it seemed peculiarly significant to M. Saillard when he heard of it through M. Clergeot. He went to confer with his son-in-law. Bixiou happened to be working with his chief at the time ; he left Baudoyer with his relative and betook himself to the Rabourdins.

Work was suspended.

BIXIOU (*coming in.*) "You are taking things coolly here,

M

gentlemen! You don't know what is going on downstairs. *La Vertueuse Rabourdin* is in for it; yes, cashiered! A painful scene with the minister."

DUTOQC (*looking at Bixiou*). "Is that a fact?"

BIXIOU. "Who will be any the worse? Not you for one; du Bruel will be chief clerk, and you his assistant. Monsieur Baudoyer will be head of the division."

FLEURY. "I'll bet a hundred francs that Baudoyer will never be head of the division."

VIMEUX. "Will you join us, Monsieur Poiret, and take the bet?"

POIRET. "I get my pension on the 1st of January."

BIXIOU. "What, shall we never more behold your shoe-laces! What will the department do without you? Who will take my bet?—"

DUTOQC. "Not I; I should be betting on a certainty. Monsieur Rabourdin is nominated. Monsieur de la Billardiére on his death-bed recommended him to the two ministers, and said that he had drawn the pay while Rabourdin did all the work. He had scruples of conscience; so, subject to orders from above, they promised to nominate Rabourdin to ease his mind."

BIXIOU. "Gentlemen, all of you take my wager; there are seven of you, for you will be one, Monsieur Phellion. I bet you a dinner of five hundred francs at the Rocher de Cancale that Rabourdin will not get La Billardiére's place. It won't cost you a hundred francs apiece, whereas I risk five hundred. I'll take you single-handed, in short. Does that suit? Will you go in, du Bruel?"

PHELLION (*laying down his pen*). "On what, m^{onsieur}, does your contingent proposition depend? for contingent it is; but I err in using the word 'proposition,' I mean to say 'contract.' A wager constitutes a contract."

FLEURY. "No, you can't call it a contract, the Code does not recognize a wager; you can't take action to enforce it."

DUTOCQ. "The Code recognizes it if it makes provision against it."

BIXIOU. "Well put, Dutocq, my boy."

POIRET. "Indeed!"

FLEURY. "That is right. It is as if you refuse to pay your debts, you admit them."

THUILLIER. "Famous jurisconsults you would make!"

POIRET. "I am as curious as Monsieur Phellion to know what Monsieur Bixiou's bet is about——"

BIXIOU (*shouts across the office*). "Du Bruel! are you going in?"

DU BRUEL (*showing himself*). "Fiddle-de-dee! gentlemen, I have something difficult to do; I have to draw up the announcement of Monsieur de la Billardiére's death. For mercy's sake, a little quiet; you had better laugh and bet afterward."

THUILLIER. "Better bet! you are infringing on my puns."

BIXIOU (*going into du Bruel's office*). "The old boy's panegyric is a very hard thing to write, du Bruel, and that is a fact; I would sooner have made a caricature of him."

DU BRUEL. "Do help me, Bixiou."

BIXIOU. "I am quite willing, though this sort of thing is easier to do after dinner."

DU BRUEL. "We will dine together." (*Reads.*) "'Every day religion and the Monarchy lose some one of those who fought for them in the time of the Revolution——'"

BIXIOU. "Bad. I should put—'Death is particularly busy among the oldest champions of the Monarchy and the most faithful servants of a King, whose heart bleeds at each fresh blow.''" (*Du Bruel writes hastily.*) "'Monsieur le Baron Flamet de la Billardiére died this morning of dropsy on the chest, brought on by heart complaint——' You see, it is of some consequence to prove that a man in a government office has a heart; you might slip in a little padding about the

emotions of Royalists during the Terror, eh? It would not be amiss. Yet—no. The minor newspapers would be saying that the emotion struck not the heart, but regions lower down. We won't mention it. What have you put?"

Du BRUEL (*reads*). "'A scion of an old parliamentary stock——'"

BIXIOU. "Very good! That is poetical, and *stock* is profoundly true."

Du BRUEL (*continues*). "'—in whom devotion to the throne, no less than attachment to the faith of our fathers, was handed down from generation to generation; Monsieur de la Billardiére——'"

BIXIOU. "I should put 'Monsieur le Baron.'"

Du BRUEL. "But he wasn't a baron in 1793."

BIXIOU. "It is all one. Don't you know that Fouché, in the time of the Empire, was once telling an anecdote of the Convention and Robespierre; and in the course of it he said: 'Robespierre said to me, "*Duc d'Otrante*, go to the Hôtel de Ville'"—so there is a precedent."

Du BRUEL. "Just let me jot that down! But we must not put 'the baron' here; I am keeping all the favors the King showered upon him for the end."

BIXIOU. "Ah! right—it is the dramatic effect, the curtain picture of the article."

Du BRUEL. "It comes here, do you see? 'By raising Monsieur de la Billardiére to the rank of baron, by appointing him gentleman in ordinary——'"

BIXIOU (*aside*). "Very ordinary."

Du BRUEL. "'—of the bedchamber, etc., his majesty rewarded the services of the provost who tempered a rigorous performance of his duty with the habitual mildness of the Bourbons, and the courage of a Vendean who did not bow the knee to the Imperial idol. Monsieur de la Billardiére leaves a son who inherits his devotion and his talents,' and so on and so on."

BIXIOU. "Aren't you coming it rather too strong? Isn't the coloring too rich? There is that poetical flight 'the Imperial idol' and 'bowing the knee;' I should tone it down a bit. Hang it all! Vaudevilles spoil your hand, till you cannot write pedestrian prose. I should put—'He belonged to the small number of those who,' etc. Simplify; you have a simpleton to deal with."

DU BRUEL. "There is another joke for a vaudeville. You would make your fortune at writing for the stage, Bixiou!"

BIXIOU. "What have you put about Quiberon!" (*Reads.*) "That is not the thing! This is how I should draft it—'In a work recently published, he took all the responsibility of the misfortunes of the Quiberon expedition upon himself, thus giving the measure of a devotion which shrank from no sacrifice.' That is neat and ingenious, and you save La Billardiére's character."

DU BRUEL. "But at the expense of whom?"

BIXIOU (*serious as a priest in a pulpit*). "Of Hoche and Tallien, of course. Why, don't you know your history?"

DU BRUEL. "No. I have subscribed to the Baudoins' collection, but I have not had time to look into it: there are no subjects for vaudevilles."

PHELLION (*in the doorway*). "Monsieur Bixiou, we should all like to know what it is that can induce you to believe that Monsieur Rabourdin will not be nominated as head of the division, when the virtuous and worthy Monsieur Rabourdin has taken the responsibility of the division for nine months, and stands first in order of seniority in the department; and the minister no sooner comes back from Monsieur de la Billardiére's than he sends the usher to fetch him."

BIXIOU. "Daddy Phellion, do you know geography?"

PHELLION (*swelling visibly*). "So I flatter myself, sir."

BIXIOU. "History?"

PHELLION (*modestly*). "Perhaps."

BIXIOU (*looking at him*). "Your diamond is not properly set; it will drop out directly. Well, you know nothing of human nature; you have gone no further in that study than in your explorations of the suburbs of Paris."

POIRET (*in a low voice to Vimeux*). "Suburbs of Paris! I thought that we were talking about Monsieur Rabourdin."

BIXIOU. "Does Rabourdin's office in a body take my bet?"

OMNES. "Yes."

BIXIOU. "Du Bruel, are you going in?"

DU BRUEL. "I should think so! It is to our interest that our chief clerk should be head of the division, for all the rest of us go up a step."

THUILLIER. "We all go *a-head*!" (*Aside to Phellion.*) "That was neat."

BIXIOU. "I bet he won't, and for this reason. You will hardly understand it; but I will tell you why, all the same. It is right and fair that Monsieur Rabourdin should get the appointment (*looks at Dutocq*); for seniority, ability, and probity are recognized, appreciated, and rewarded in his person. Beside, it is, of course, to the interest of the administration to appoint him." (*Phellion, Poiret, and Thuillier; listening without comprehending a word, look as though they were trying to see through darkness.*) "Well, because the appointment is deserved and so suitable in all these ways, I (knowing all the while how wise and just the measure is) will bet that it will not be taken. No; it will end in failure, like the Boulogne and Russian expeditions, though genius had left nothing undone to insure success. I am playing the devil's game."

DU BRUEL. "But whom else can they appoint?"

BIXIOU. "The more I think of Baudoyer, the more plainly it appears that in the matter of qualifications for the post he is the exact opposite of Rabourdin. Consequently, *he* will be head of the division."

DUTOQC (*driven to extremities*). "But Monsieur des Lupeaulx sent for me this morning to ask for my Charlet; and he told me that Monsieur Rabourdin had just been nominated, and young La Billardiére was to be transferred to the Audit Office."

BIXIOU. "Appointed! appointed! The nomination will not be so much as signed for ten days to come. They will make the appointment for New Year's Day. There, look at your chief down there in the courtyard, and tell me if *La Vertueuse Rabourdin* looks like a man in favor! Any one would think he had been cashiered." (*Fleury rushes to the window.*) "Good-day, gentlemen. I am just going to announce the nomination to Monsieur Baudoyer; it will infuriate him, at any rate, the holy man! And then I will tell him about our bet, to hearten him up again. That is what we call a *peripatécia* on the stage, is it not, du Bruel? What does it matter to me? If I win, he will surely take me for assistant clerk?" (*goes out.*)

POIRET. "Everybody says that that gentleman is clever; well, for my own part, I never can make anything out of his talk" (*writing as he speaks*). "I listen and listen, I hear words, and cannot grasp any sense in them. He brings in the suburbs of Paris when he is talking about human nature; then he begins with the Boulogne and Russian expeditions, and says that he is playing the devil's game." (*Lays down his pen and goes to the stove.*) "First of all, you must assume that the devil gambles, then find out what game he plays! First of all, there is the game of dominoes——" (*blows his nose.*)

FLEURY (*interrupting him*). "Old Poiret is blowing his nose; it is eleven o'clock."

DU BRUEL. "So it is! Already! I am off to the secretary's office."

POIRET. "Where was I?"

THUILLIER. "*Domino*, which is 'to the Lord?' for you

were talking of the devil, and the devil is a suzerain without a charter. But this is not so much a pun as a play on words. Anyhow, I see no difference between a play on words and——” (*Sébastien comes in to collect circulars to be checked and signed.*)

VIMEUX. “Here you are, my fine fellow! Your time of trial is over; you will be established! Monsieur Rabourdin will get the appointment. You were at Madame Rabourdin’s party yesterday.” How lucky you are to go to that house! They say that very handsome women go there.”

SÉBASTIEN. “I do not know.”

FLEURY. “Are you blind?”

SÉBASTIEN. “I am not at all fond of looking at things when I cannot have them!”

PHELLION (*delighted*). “Well said, young man.”

VIMEUX. “You surely look at Madame Rabourdin. Why, hang it all! a charming woman.”

FLEURY. “Pooh! a thin figure. I have seen her at the Tuileries gardens. Percilliée, Ballet’s mistress and Castaing’s victim, is much more to my taste.”

PHELLION. “But what has an actress to do with a chief clerk’s wife?”

DUTOQ. “Both are playing a comedy.”

FLEURY (*looking askance at Dutocq*). “The physical has nothing to do with the moral; and if by that you understand——”

DUTOQ. “For my own part, I understand nothing.”

FLEURY. “Which of us will be chief clerk? who wants to know?”

OMNES. “Tell us!”

FLEURY. “It will be Colleville.”

THUILLIER. “Why?”

FLEURY. “Madame Colleville has finally taken the shortest way—through the sacristy.”

THUILLIER (*drily*). “I am too much Monsieur Colleville’s

friend, Monsieur Fleury, not to beg of you to refrain from speaking lightly of his wife."

PHELLION. "Women, who have no way of defending themselves, should never be the subject of our conversations——"

VIMEUX. "And so much the less, since pretty Madame Colleville would not ask Fleury to her house ; so he blackens her character by way of revenge."

FLEURY. "She would not receive me on the same footing as Thuillier, but I went——"

THUILLIER. "When ? Where ? Under her windows ?"

Fleury's swagger made him so formidable a person in the office that every one was surprised when he took Thuillier's last word. His resignation had its source in a bill for two hundred francs with a tolerably doubtful signature, which document Thuillier was to present to his sister. A deep silence succeeded to the skirmish. Everybody worked from one o'clock till three. Du Bruel did not come back.

Toward half-past three preparations for departure were made—brushing of hats and changing of coats went on simultaneously all through the department. The cherished half-hour thus spent on small domestic cares shortened the working day by precisely thirty minutes. The temperature of overheated rooms fell several degrees ; the odor peculiar to offices evaporated ; silence settled down once more ; and by four o'clock none were left but the real workers, the clerks who took their duties in earnest. A minister may know the men that do the work of the department by making a round thereof punctually at four o'clock ; but such great and serious persons never by any chance indulge in espionage of this kind.

At that hour divers chief clerks met each other in the courtyard and exchanged their ideas on the day's events. Generally speaking, as they walked off by twos and threes, the opinion was in favor of Rabourdin ; but a few old stagers, such as M. Clergeot, would shake their heads with a "*Habent*

sua sidera lites." Saillard and Baudoyer were courteously avoided. Nobody knew quite what to say to them about Billardièr's death, and everybody felt that Baudoyer might want the berth, though he had no right to it.

When the last-named pair had left the buildings some distance behind, Saillard broke silence with: "This is not going well for you, my poor Baudoyer."

"I fail to understand what Elizabeth is thinking about," returned his son-in-law. "She sent Godard post-haste for a passport for Falleix. Godard said that, acting on Uncle Mitral's advice, she hired a post-chaise, and Falleix is on the way back to his own country at this moment."

"Something connected with the business, no doubt," said Saillard.

"The most urgent business for us just now is to find a way of getting Monsieur de la Billardièr's place."

They had come along the Rue Saint-Honoré, till by this time they had reached the Palais Royal. Dutocq came up and raised his hat.

"If I can be of any use to you, sir, under the circumstances, pray command me," he said, addressing Baudoyer. "I am not less devoted than Monsieur Godard to your interests."

"Such an overture is, at any rate, a consolation," returned Baudoyer; "one has the esteem of honest people."

"If you will condescend to use your influence to procure the place of assistant clerk under you, and the chief clerk's place for Monsieur Bixiou, you will make the fortunes of two men, and both of them are capable of doing anything to secure your elevation."

"Are you laughing at us, sir?" asked Saillard, opening wide foolish eyes.

"Far be the thought from me," said Dutocq. "I have just been to take the obituary notice of Monsieur de la Billardièr to the newspapers; Monsieur des Lupeaulx sent me. I

have the highest respect for your talents after reading the article in the paper. When the time comes for making an end of Rabourdin, it is in my power to strike the final blow; condescend to recollect that."

Dutocq disappeared.

"I'll be hanged if I understand a word of this," said Saillard, as he stared at Baudoyer, whose little eyes expressed no common degree of bewilderment. "We must send out for the paper this evening."

When the pair entered the sitting-room on the first floor they found Mme. Saillard, Elizabeth, M. Gaudron, and the vicar of St. Paul's, all seated by a large fire. The vicar turned as they came in; and Elizabeth, looking at her husband, made a sign of intelligence, but, owing to his denseness, to little purpose.

"Sir," the curé was saying, "I was unwilling to delay my thanks for the magnificent gift with which you have adorned my poor church; I could not venture into debt to buy that splendid monstrance. It is fit for a cathedral. As one of the most regular and pious of our parishioners, you must have been particularly impressed by the bareness of the high altar. I am just going to see Monsieur le Coadjuteur; he will shortly express his satisfaction."

"I have done nothing as yet——" began Baudoyer, but his wife broke in upon him.

"Monsieur le Curé," said she, "I may betray the whole of his secret now. Monsieur Baudoyer counts upon completing what he has begun by giving you a canopy against corpus Domini. But the purchase depends, to some extent, upon the state of our finances, and our finances depend upon our advancement."

"God rewards those who honor Him," said M. Gaudron, as he followed the curé.

"Why do you not do us the honor to take pot-luck with us?" asked Saillard.

"Don't go, my dear Gaudron," said the curé. "I have an invitation to dine with the curé of Saint-Roch, you know; he will take Monsieur de la Billardiére's funeral service to-morrow."

"Monsieur le Curé de Saint-Roch might say a word for us, perhaps?" began Baudoyer, but his wife gave a sharp tug at his coat-tails.

"Do be quiet, Baudoyer!" she whispered, as she drew him into a corner. "You have given a monstrance worth five thousand francs to our parish church. I will explain it all by-and-by."

Baudoyer, the close-fisted, made a hideous grimace, and appeared pensive throughout dinner.

"Whatever made you take so much trouble to get a passport for Falleix? What is this that you are meddling in?" he asked at length.

"It seems to me that Falleix's business is, to some extent, ours," Elizabeth answered drily, warning her husband with a glance not to speak before M. Gaudron.

"Certainly it is," said old Saillard, thinking of the partnership.

"You reached the newspaper offices in time, I hope," continued Elizabeth, addressing M. Gaudron, as she handed him a plate of soup.

"Yes, my dear madame," the curé replied. "One editor made not the slightest difficulty when he read the few words from the grand almoner's secretary. Through his good offices the little paragraph was put in the most suitable position. I should never have thought of that, but the young man at the newspaper office was very wide awake. The champions of religion may now combat infidelity with equal forces, for there is much talent shown in the Royalist newspapers. I have every reason to believe that success will crown your hopes. But you must remember, my dear Baudoyer, to use your influence for Monsieur Colleville. It is in him that his emi-

nence is interested, and I received an injunction to mention Monsieur Colleville to you."

"If I am head of the division, he shall be one of my chief clerks if they like," said Baudoyer.

The clue to the riddle was discovered after dinner when the porter came in with the ministerial paper. The two following paragraphs (called *entre-filets* in journalistic language) appeared therein among the items of news:

"M. LE BARON DE LA BILLARDIÈRE died this morning after a long and painful illness. In him the King loses a devoted servant, and the church one of the most pious among her children. M. de la Billardiére's end was a worthy crown of a great career, a fitting termination of a life that was wholly devoted to perilous missions in perilous times, and subsequently to the fulfillment of very difficult duties. As grand provost of a department, M. de la Billardiére's force of character triumphed over all obstacles raised by rebellion; and later, when he accepted an arduous post as the head of a department, his insight was not less useful than his Frenchman's urbanity in the conduct of the weighty affairs transacted in his province. No rewards were ever better deserved than those by which his majesty was pleased to crown a loyalty that never wavered under the usurper. The ancient family will live again in a younger scion, who inherits the talent and devotion of the excellent man whose loss is mourned by so many friends. His majesty, with a gracious word, has already given out that M. Benjamin de la Billardiére is to be one of the gentlemen in ordinary of the bedchamber.

"Any of the late M. de la Billardiére's numerous friends who have not yet received cards, and may not receive them in time, are informed that the funeral will take place tomorrow at Saint-Roch at four o'clock. The funeral sermon will be preached by M. l'Abbé Fontanon."

“M. ISIDORE BAUDOYER, representative of one of the oldest burgher families in Paris, and chief clerk in the La Billardiére division, has just revived memories of the old traditions of piety which distinguished the great burgher houses of olden times, when citizens were so jealous of the pomp of religion and such lovers of her monuments. The church of St. Paul, a basilica which we owe to the Society of Jesus, lacked a monstrance in keeping with its architectural splendors. Neither the vestry nor the incumbent could afford to give such an adornment to the altar. M. Baudoyer has just presented the parish with the monstrance that many persons have admired at the establishment of M. Gohier, the King’s goldsmith; and, thanks to piety that did not shrink from so large a sum, the church of St. Paul now possesses a masterpiece of the goldsmith’s craft, executed from M. de Sommervieux’s* designs. We are glad to give publicity to a fact which shows the absurdity of Liberal bombast as to the state of feeling among the Parisian bourgeoisie. The upper middle classes have been Royalist through all time, and always will prove themselves Royalists at need.”

“The price was five thousand francs,” said the Abbé Gaudron, “but for ready money the Court goldsmith lowered his demands.”

“Representative of one of the oldest burgher families in Paris!” repeated Saillard. “There it is in print, and in the official paper too!”

“Dear Monsieur Gaudron, do help my father to think of something to slip into the countess’ ear when he takes her the monthly allowance—just a few words that say everything. I will leave you now. I must go out with Uncle Mitral. Would you believe it? I could not find Uncle Bidault. What dog-hole can he be living in! Monsieur Mitral, knowing his ways, said that all his business is done between eight

* See “At the Sign of the Cat and Racket.”

o'clock and noon ; after that hour he is only to be found at a place called the *Café Thémis*—a queer-sounding name——”

“Do they do justice there?” the abbé asked, laughing.

“How does he get to a café at the corner of the *Quai des Augustins* and the *Rue Dauphine*? He plays a game of dominoes there with his friend *Monsieur Gobseck* every night, they say. I don't want to go all by myself, but uncle will take me and bring me back again.”

As she spoke, *Mitral* showed his yellow countenance beneath a wig that might have been made of twitch-grass and plastered down on the top of his head. This worthy made a sign, which, being interpreted, meant that his niece had better come at once, without further waste of time which was paid at the rate of two francs an hour ; and *Mme. Baudoyer* went accordingly, without a word of explanation to her father or husband.

When *Elizabeth* had gone, *M. Gaudron* turned to *Baudoyer*.

“Heaven,” observed he, “has bestowed on you a treasure of prudence and virtue in your wife ; she is a pattern of wisdom, a Christian woman with a divine gift of understanding. Religion alone can form a character so complete. To-morrow I will say the mass for the success of the good cause. In the interests of the monarchy and religion you must be appointed. *Monsieur Rabourdin* is a Liberal ; he subscribes to the ‘*Journal des Débats*,’ a disastrous publication that levies war on *Monsieur le Comte de Villèle* to serve the interests of *Monsieur de Chateaubriand*. His eminence is sure to see the paper this evening, if it is only on account of his poor friend *Monsieur de la Billardiére* ; and *Monseigneur le Coadjuteur* will be sure to mention you and *Rabourdin*. I know *Monsieur le Curé* ; if any one thinks of his dear church, he does not forget them in his sermon ; and now, at this moment, he has the honor to dine with the *coadjuteur* at the house of *Monsieur le Curé de Saint-Roch*.”

At these words it began to dawn upon *Saillard* and *Bau-*

doyer that Elizabeth had not been idle since Godard brought her the news.

"She is a sharp one, is Elizabeth!" cried Saillard. He could appreciate his daughter's quick, mole-like progress more fully than the abbé could.

"She sent Godard to Monsieur Rabourdin's to find out what newspaper he takes," continued Gaudron, "and I gave his eminence's secretary a hint; for as things are at this moment, the church and the crown are bound to know their friends and their enemies."

"These five days I have been trying to think of something to say to his excellency's wife," said Saillard.

Baudoyer could not take his eyes off the paper. "All Paris is reading that," he said.

"Your praise costs us four thousand eight hundred francs, sonny!" said Mme. Saillard.

"You have nobly adorned the house of God," put in the Abbé Gaudron.

"We might have saved our souls without that, though," returned she. "But the place, if Baudoyer gets it, is worth an extra eight thousand francs, so the sacrifice will not be great. And if he doesn't? Eh! *ma mère*?" she continued, as she looked at her husband. "If he doesn't—what a drain on us!"

"Oh! well," cried Saillard, in the enthusiasm of the moment, "then we should make it up out of the business. Falleix is going to expand his business. He made his brother a stock-jobber on purpose to make him useful. Elizabeth might as well have told us why Falleix had flown off. But let us think of something to say. This is what I thought of: 'Madame, if you would only say a word to his excellency——'"

"'Would only!'" broke in Gaudron. "'If you would condescend' is more respectful. Beside, you must first make sure that Madame la Dauphine will use her influence for you, for in that case you might insinuate the notion of falling in with her royal highness' wishes."

"The vacant post ought to be expressly named," said Baudoyer.

"*'Madame la Comtesse,'*" began Saillard, as he rose to his feet, with an ingratiating smile directed at his wife.

"Good gracious, Saillard, how funny you look! Do take care, my boy, or you will make her laugh."

"*'Madame la Comtesse!'* (Is that better?)" he asked of his wife.

"Yes, ducky."

"The late Monsieur de la Billardiére's place is vacant; my son-in-law, Monsieur Baudoyer——'"

"A man of talent and lofty piety,'" prompted Gaudron.

"Put it down, Baudoyer," cried old Saillard; "put it down!"

Baudoyer, in all simplicity, took up a pen and wrote his own panegyric without a blush, precisely as Nathan or Canalis might review one of his own books.

"*'Madame la Comtesse,'*" repeated Saillard, for the third time, then he broke off; "you see, mother, I am making believe that you are the minister's wife."

"Do you take me for a fool?" retorted she. "I see that quite well."

"The late worthy Monsieur de la Billardiére's place is vacant; my son-in-law, Monsieur Baudoyer, a man of consummate talent and lofty piety——'"

He paused for a moment, looked at M. Gaudron, who seemed to be pondering something, and then added—

"Would be very glad to get it.' Ha! not bad, it is short, and says all we want to say."

"But just wait a bit, Saillard! You surely can see that Monsieur l'Abbé is turning things over in his mind," cried his wife, "so don't disturb him."

"Would be very happy if you would deign to interest yourself on his behalf,'" resumed Gaudron; "'and by saying a few words to his excellency you would be doing Madame la

Dauphine a particular pleasure, for it has been his good fortune to find a protectress in her.' ”

“Ah! Monsieur Gaudron, that last remark was well worth the monstrance; I am not so sorry now about the four thousand eight hundred francs. Beside, Baudoyer, I say, you are going to pay for it, my boy. Have you put that down?”

“I will hear you say that over, night and morning, *ma mère*,” said Mme. Saillard. “Yes, it is very well hit off, is that speech. How fortunate you are to be so learned, Monsieur Gaudron! That is what comes of studying in these seminaries; you are taught how to speak to God and the saints.”

“He is as kind as he is learned,” said Baudoyer, grasping the abbé’s hands as he spoke. “Did you write that article?” he continued, pointing to the paper.

“No,” returned Gaudron. “It was written by his eminence’s secretary, a young fellow who lies under great obligations to me, and takes an interest in Monsieur Colleville. I paid for his education at the seminary.”

“A good deed never loses its reward,” commented Baudoyer.

When these four personages seated themselves down at their game of boston, Elizabeth and Uncle Mitral had reached the Café Thémis, talking by the way of the business on hand. Elizabeth’s tact had discovered the most powerful lever to force the minister’s hand. Uncle Mitral, a retired bailiff, was an expert in chicanery, in legal expedients, and precautions. He considered that the honor of the family was involved in his nephew’s success. Avarice had led him to cast an eye into Gigonnet’s strong box; he knew that all the money would go to his nephew, Baudoyer; and therefore he wished to see Baudoyer in a position that befitted the fortunes of the Saillards and Gigonnet, for all would come some day to Elizabeth’s little daughter. What may not a girl look for when she has more than a hundred thousand francs a year?

Mitral had taken up his niece's ideas and grasped them thoroughly. So he had hastened Falleix's journey by explaining that you can travel quicker by post. Since then he had reflected, over his dinner, upon the proper curve to be given to a spring of Elizabeth's designing.

Arrived at the *Café Thémis*, he told his niece that he had better go in alone to arrange with Gigonnet, and left her outside in the hack till the time should come for her intervention. Elizabeth could see Gobseck and Bidault through the window-panes; their heads were thrown into relief by the bright yellow-painted panels of the old-fashioned coffee-house; they looked like two cameos; it seemed as if the cold, unchanging expression on their countenances had been caught and fixed there by the carver's art. The misers were surrounded by aged faces, each one furrowed with curving wrinkles that started from the nose and brought the glazed cheek-bones into prominence—wrinkles in which thirty per cent. discount seemed to be written. All the faces brightened up at sight of Mitral; a tigerish curiosity glittered in all eyes.

"Hey! hey! it is Daddy Mitral!" cried Chaboisseau, a little old bill-discounter, who did his business among publishers and booksellers.

"My word! so it is," replied the paper-merchant, by name Métivier. "Ah! 'tis an old monkey, you can't teach him any tricks!"

"And you are an old raven, a good judge of corpses."

"Precisely so," said the stern Gobseck.

"Why have you come here, my boy! To nab our friend Métivier?"* asked Gigonnet, pointing out a man who looked like a retired porter.

"Your Grandniece Elizabeth is outside, Daddy Gigonnet," whispered Mitral.

"What? Anything wrong?" queried Bidault. The old man scowled as he spoke, and his air was about as tender as

* See "*Lost Illusions*" and "*The Middle Classes*."

the expression of a headsman on a scaffold ; but, in spite of his Roman manhood, he must have felt perturbed, for his deep carmine countenance lost a trifle of its color.

"Well, and if something had gone wrong, wouldn't you help Saillard's child, a little thing that has knitted stockings for you these thirty years?" cried Mitral.

"If security is forthcoming, I do not say no," returned Gigonnet. "Falleix is in this. Your Falleix has set up his brother as a stockbroker; he does as much business as the Brézacs; with what? His brains, no doubt. After all, Saillard is not a baby."

"He knows the value of money," remarked Chaboisseau. And one and all the old men wagged their heads. A man of imagination would have shuddered if he had heard those words as they were uttered.

"Beside, if anything happens to my kith or kin, it is no affair of mine," began Bidault-Gigonnet. "I make it a principle," continued he, "never to be let in with my friends or relatives; for you only get your death through your weakest spot. Ask Gobseck; he is soft."

All the bill-discounters applauded this doctrine, nodding their metallic heads, till you might have listened for the creaking of ill-greased machinery.

"Oh, come now, Gigonnet," put in Chaboisseau, "a little tenderness when your stockings have been knitted for you for thirty years."

"Ah! that counts for something," commented Gobseck.

"There are no outsiders here," pursued Mitral, who had been taking a look round, "so we can speak freely. I have come here with a bit of good business——"

"If it is good, what makes you come to us?" Gigonnet interrupted sourly.

"A chap that was a gentleman of the bedchamber, an old Chouan, what's his name—La Billardiére—is dead."

"Really?" asked Gobseck.

"And here is my nephew giving monstrances to churches!" said Gigonnet.

"He is not such a fool as to give, he is selling them, daddy," Mitral retorted proudly. "It is a question of getting Monsieur de la Billardiére's place; and to reach it, one must seize——"

"*Seize!* Always a bailiff!" cried Métivier, clapping Mitral on the shoulder. "I like that, I do!"

"Seizing the *Sieur Chardin des Lupeaulx* between our claws," continued Mitral. "Now, Elizabeth has found out how to do it, and it is——"

"Elizabeth!" Gigonnet broke in again. "Dear little creature! She takes after her grandfather, my poor brother. Bidault had not his like. Ah! if you had only seen him at old furniture sales. Such an instinct! Up to everything! What does she want?"

"Oh, come now! Daddy Gigonnet, you find your family affections very quickly. There must be some cause for this phenomenon."

"You child!" said Gobseck, addressing Gigonnet, "always too impetuous."

"Come, my masters, Gobseck and Gigonnet both, you need des *Lupeaulx*; you recollect how you plucked him, and you are afraid that he may ask for a little of his down again," said Mitral.

"Can we talk of this business with him?" Gobseck asked, indicating Mitral.

"Mitral is one of us; he would not play a trick on old customers," returned Gigonnet. "Very well, Mitral. Between ourselves," he continued, lowering his voice for the retired bailiff's ear, "we three have just been buying up certain debts, and the admission of them lies with the Committee of Liquidation."

"What can you concede?" asked Mitral.

"Nothing," said Gobseck.

"Our names don't appear in it," added Gigonnet. "Samanon is acting as our fence."

"Look here, Gigonnet," began Mitral. "It is cold, and your grandniece is waiting. I'll put the whole thing in a word or two, and you will understand. You two between you must lend Falleix two hundred and fifty thousand francs, without interest. At this present moment he is tearing along the road thirty leagues away from Paris, with a courier riding ahead."

"Is it possible?" asked Gobseck.

"Where is he going?" cried Gigonnet.

"Why, he is going down to des Lupeaulx's fine estate in the country. He knows the neighborhood; and with the aforesaid two hundred and fifty thousand francs he is going to buy up some of the excellent land round about the secretary-general's hovel. The land will always fetch what was given for it. And a deed signed in the presence of a notary need not be registered for nine days—bear that in mind! With these trifling additions, des Lupeaulx's 'estate' will pay a thousand francs per annum in taxes. *Ergo*, des Lupeaulx will be an elector of the '*grand collège*,' qualified for election, a count and anything that he likes. Do you know the deputy that backed out of it?"

The two usurers nodded.

"Des Lupeaulx would cut off a leg to be a deputy," continued Mitral. "But when we show him the contracts, he will be for having them made out in his name; our loan to be charged, of course, as a mortgage on the land, reserving the right to sell. (Aha! do you take me?) First of all, we want the place for Baudoyer; afterward we hand over des Lupeaulx to you. Falleix is stopping down there, getting ready for the election; so through Falleix you will have a pistol held to des Lupeaulx's head all through the election, for Falleix's friends are in the majority. Do you see Falleix's hand in this, Daddy Gigonnet?"

"I see Mitral's too," remarked Métivier. "The trick is neatly done."

"It is a bargain," said Gigonnet. "That is so, isn't it, Gobseck? Falleix must sign counter-deeds for us, and have the mortgage made out in his own name; and we will pay des Lupeaulx a visit in the nick of time."

"And *we* are being robbed," put in Gobseck.

"Ah! I should very much like to know the man that robs you, daddy," retorted Mitral.

"Why, no one can rob us but ourselves," returned Gigonnet. "We thought we were doing a good thing when we bought up all des Lupeaulx's debts at a discount of sixty per cent."

"You can add them to the mortgage on his place, and have yet another hold on him through the interest," returned Mitral.

"That is possible," said Gobseck.

Bidault, *alias* Gigonnet, exchanged a quick glance with Gobseck, and went to the door.

"Go ahead, Elizabeth!" he said, addressing his niece. "We have your man fast, but look after details. You have made a good beginning, sly girl! Go through with it, you have your uncle's esteem——" and he struck his hand playfully in hers.

"But Métivier and Chaboisseau may try a sudden stroke," said Mitral; "they might go to-night to some Opposition paper, catch the ball at a rebound, and pay us back for the Ministerialist article. Go back by yourself, child; I will not let those two cormorants go out of sight."

And he returned to the café.

"To-morrow the money shall go to its destination through a word to the receiver-general. We will raise a hundred thousand crowns' worth of his paper *among friends*," said Gigonnet, when Mitral came to speak to him.

Next day the readers of a Liberal paper in wide circulation beheld the following paragraph among the items of news. It had been inserted by command of Messrs. Chaboisseau and Métivier, to whom no editor could refuse anything; for were they not shareholders in two newspapers, and did they not also discount the bills of publishers, printers, and paper-merchants?

"Yesterday," so ran the paragraph, "a Ministerialist paper evidently pointed out M. le Baron de la Billardière's successor. M. Baudoyer is one of the most eligible citizens of a thickly populated district, where his beneficence is not less known than the piety upon which the Ministerialist sheet lays so much stress. But mention might have been made of M. Baudoyer's abilities. Did our contemporary remember that even in vaunting the antiquity of M. Baudoyer's burgher descent (and an ancient burgher ancestry is as much a noblesse as any other), in the matter of that very burgher descent she touched upon the reason of the probable exclusion of her candidate? Gratuitous treachery! The good lady, according to her wont, flatters those whom she destroys. M. Baudoyer's appointment would be a tribute to the virtue and capacity of the middle classes, and of the middle class we shall always be the advocates, though we may see that often we are only defending a lost cause. It would be a piece of good policy and an act of justice to nominate M. Baudoyer to the vacant post; so the ministry will not permit it. The religious sheet for once showed more sense than its masters; it will get into trouble."

The next day was Friday, the day of Mme. Rabourdin's dinner-party. At midnight on Thursday des Lupeaulx had left her on the staircase at the Bouffons, where she stood, in her radiant beauty, her hand on Mme. de Camps' arm (for Mme. Firmiani had recently married); and when the old

libertine came to himself again, his ideas of revenge had calmed down, or rather they had grown cooler—he could think of nothing but that last glance exchanged with Mme. Rabourdin.

“I will make sure of Rabourdin,” he thought, “by forgiving him in the first instance; I will be even with him later on. At present, if he does not get his step, I must give up a woman who might be an invaluable aid to a great political success, for she understands everything; she shrinks back from no idea. What is more, in that case I should not find out this administrative scheme of Rabourdin’s until it was laid before the minister. Come, dear des Lupeaulx; it is a question of overcoming all obstacles for your Célestine. You may grimace, Madame la Comtesse, but you are going to invite Madame Rabourdin to your next small select party.”

Some men can put revenge into a corner of their hearts till they gratify their passions; des Lupeaulx was one of these. His mind was fully made up; he determined to carry Rabourdin’s nomination.

“I am going to prove to you, dear chief clerk, that I deserve a high place in your diplomatic galleys,” he said to himself, as he took his seat in his private office and opened his newspapers.

He had known the contents of the Ministerial sheet only too well at five o’clock on the previous day, so he did not care to amuse himself by reading it through; but he opened it to glance at the obituary notice of La Billardiére, thinking as he did so of the predicament in which du Bruel had put him, when he brought in the satirical performance composed under Bixiou’s editorship. He could not help laughing as he perused the biography of the late Comte de la Fontaine, adapted and reprinted, after a few months’ interval, for M. de la Billardiére. Then, all of a sudden, his eyes were dazzled by the name of Baudoyer! With fury he read the specious article which compromised the department. He rang the bell

vigorously and sent for Dutocq, meaning to send him to the newspaper office. But what was his astonishment when he read the reply in the Opposition paper, for it so happened that the Liberal sheet was the first to come to hand. The thing was getting serious. He knew the dodge; it seemed to him that the master hand was making a mess of his cards, and he took his opponent for a Greek of the first order. To dispose so adroitly of two papers of opposite politics, and that at once, and on the same evening; to begin the game, moreover, by guessing at the minister's intentions! He fancied that he recognized the hand of an acquaintance, a Liberal editor, and vowed to question him that night at the opera. Dutocq appeared.

"Read that," said des Lupeaulx, holding out the two papers while he ran his eyes over the rest of the batch to see whether Baudoyer had pulled other wires. "Just go and find out who it was that took it into his head to compromise the department in this way."

"It was not Monsieur Baudoyer anyhow," replied Dutocq. "He did not leave the office yesterday. There is no need to go to the office. When I took your article yesterday, I saw the abbé there. He came provided with a letter from the grand almoner; you yourself would have given way if you had seen it."

"Dutocq, you have some grudge against Monsieur Rabourdin, and it is not right of you, for he prevented your dismissal twice. Still we cannot help our feelings; and one may happen to dislike a man who does one a kindness. Only, bear in mind that if you permit yourself the smallest attempt at treachery against him until I give the word, it will be your ruin; you can count me as your enemy. As for my friend and his newspaper, let the grand almonry subscribe for our number of copies, if its columns are to be devoted to their exclusive use. The year is almost at an end, the question of subscriptions will be raised directly, and then we shall see.

As for La Billardière's post, there is one way of putting a stop to this sort of thing, and that is, to make the appointment this very day."

Dutocq went back to the office.

"Gentlemen," he remarked, "I do not know whether Bixiou has the gift of reading the future; but if you have not seen the Ministerial paper, I recommend the paragraph on Baudoyer to your careful attention; and then as Monsieur Fleury takes the Opposition paper, you may see the double of it. Certainly, Monsieur Rabourdin is a clever man; but a man who gives a monstrance worth six thousand francs to a church is deucedly clever too, as times go."

BIXIOU (*coming in*). "What do you say to the first chapter of an epistle to the Corinthians in our religious paper, and the epistle to the ministers in the Liberal sheet? How is Monsieur Rabourdin, du Bruel?"

DU BRUEL (*coming in*). "I do not know." (*Draws Bixiou into his sanctum and lowers his voice*.) "My dear fellow, your way of helping a man is uncommonly like the hangman's way, when he hoists you on his shoulders the better to break your neck. You let me in for a whipping from des Lupeaulx, and I deserved it for my stupidity. A nice thing that article on La Billardière! It is a trick that I shall not forget! The very first sentence as good as told the King that it was time to die. And the account of the Quiberon affair clearly meant that his majesty was a—— The whole thing was ironical, in fact."

BIXIOU (*bursting into a laugh*). "Oh, come! are you getting cross? Cannot one have a joke?"

DU BRUEL. "A joke! a joke! When you want to be chief clerk's assistant they will put you off with jokes, my dear fellow."

BIXIOU (*with a threat in his tones*). "Are we getting cross?"

DU BRUEL. "Yes."

BIXIOU (*drily*). "Very well, so much the worse for you."

DU BRUEL (*reflecting uneasily*). "Could you get over it yourself?"

BIXIOU (*insinuatingly*). "From a friend? I should think I could." (*Fleury's voice is heard in the office.*) "There is Fleury cursing Baudoyer. It was a neat trick, eh? Baudoyer will get the step." (*Confidentially.*) "After all, so much the better. Follow up the consequences carefully, du Bruel. Rabourdin would show a poor spirit if he stopped on under Baudoyer; he will resign, and that will leave two vacant places. You will be chief clerk, and you will take me with you as assistant. We will write vaudevilles in collaboration, and I will fag for you at the office."

DU BRUEL (*brightening*). "I say, I did not think of that. Poor Rabourdin! Still, I should be sorry."

BIXIOU. "Ah! so that is how you love him!" (*Changing his tone.*) "Oh, well, I do not pity him either. After all, he is well to do; his wife gives parties, and does not ask me, when I go everywhere! Come, adieu, no malice, du Bruel; there is a good fellow!" (*Goes out into the general office.*) "Good-day, gentlemen! Did I not tell you yesterday that if a man has nothing but principles and ability, he will always be very badly off, even with a pretty wife?"

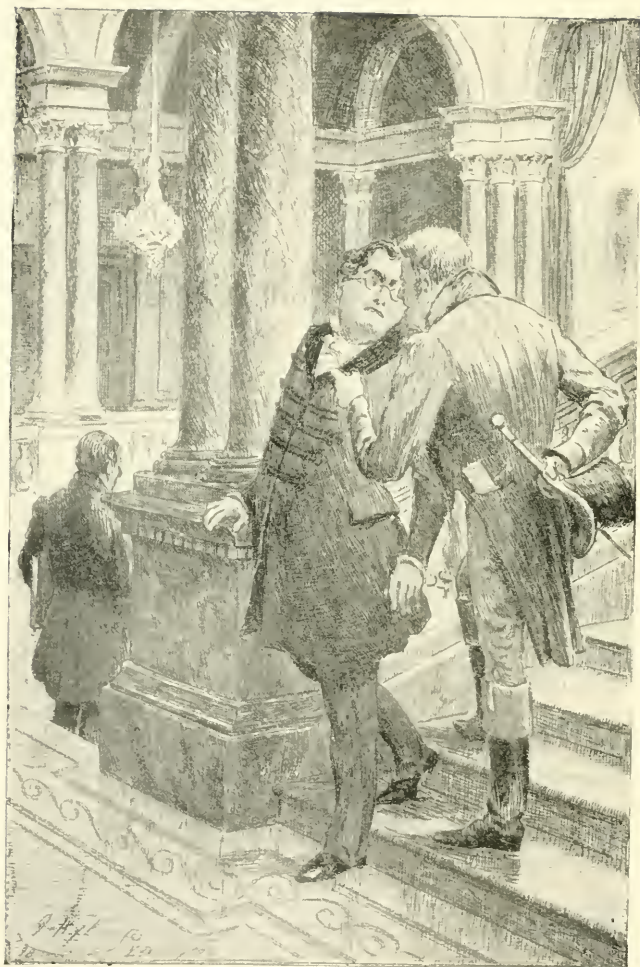
FLEURY. "You are rich yourself!"

BIXIOU. "Not bad, dear Cincinnatus! But you are going to give me a dinner at the Rocher de Cancale."

POIRET. "I never know what to make of Monsieur Bixiou!"

PHELLION (*ruefully*). "Monsieur Rabourdin so seldom reads the papers, that it may be worth while to take them in for him, and to do without them ourselves for a bit." (*Fleury hands over his sheet; Vincieux passes the newspaper taken by the office; and Phellion goes out with them.*)

At that moment des Lupeaulx was going downstairs to



"A WORD OR TWO WITH YOU, MY LORD."

breakfast with the minister. As he went, he was wondering within himself whether prudence did not dictate that he should fathom the wife's heart before displaying the fine flower of scoundrelism for the husband, and make sure, first of all, that his devotion would be rewarded. He was feeling the little pulse that still throbbed in his heart, when he met his attorney on the staircase, and was greeted with: "A word or two with you, my lord!" uttered with the smiling familiarity of a man who knows that he is indispensable.

"What, my dear Desroches!" exclaimed the politician. "What has happened? These people lose their tempers; they cannot do as I do, and wait."

"I came at once to give you warning that your bills are in the hands of Messrs. Gobseck and Gigonnet, under the name of one Samanon."

"Men that I put in the way of making enormous amounts of money!"

"Look here!" continued Desroches in lowered tones; "Gigonnet's name is Bidault; Saillard your cashier is his nephew; and Saillard is beside the father-in-law of a certain Baudoyer who thinks he has a right to the vacant post in your department. I had cause to give you warning, had I not?"

"Thanks," said des Lupeaulx, with a nod of farewell and a knowing glance.

"One stroke of the pen and you get a receipt in full," said Desroches, as he went.

"That is the way with these immense sacrifices, you can't speak of them to a woman," thought des Lupeaulx. "Is Célestine worth the riddance of all my debts? I will go and see her this morning."

And so, in a few hours' time, the fair Mme. Rabourdin was to be the arbiter of her husband's destinies; and no power on earth could warn her of the importance of her replies, no danger signal bid her compose her voice and manner. And, unluckily, she was confident of success; she did not know that

the ground beneath Rabourdin was undermined in all directions with the burrowings of teredos.

"Well, my lord," said des Lupeaulx, as he entered the breakfast-room, "have you seen the paragraphs on Baudoyer?"

"For heaven's sake, my dear fellow, let nominations alone for a minute," returned the minister. "I had that monstrosity flung at my head yesterday. To secure Rabourdin, the nomination must go before the board at once; I will not have my hand forced. It is enough so make one sick of public life. If we are to keep Rabourdin, we must promote one Colleville who——"

"Will you leave me to manage this farce and think no more about it? I will amuse you every morning with an account of the moves in a game of chess with the grand almoner," said des Lupeaulx.

"Very well," replied the minister, "work with the chief of the staff. Don't you know that an argument in an Opposition paper is the most likely thing of all to strike the King's mind? A minister overruled by a Baudoyer; just think of it!"

"A bigot and a driveler," said des Lupeaulx; "he is as incompetent as——"

"La Billardiére," put in his excellency.

"La Billardiére at least behaved like a gentleman in ordinary of the bedchamber," said des Lupeaulx. "Madame," he continued, turning to the countess, "it will be absolutely necessary now to invite Madame Rabourdin to your next small party. I must point out that Madame de Camps is a friend of hers; they were at the Italiens together yesterday, and she has been to my knowledge at the Hôtel Firmiani; so you can see whether she is likely to commit any solecism in a salon."

"Send an invitation to Madame Rabourdin, dear, and let us change the subject," said the minister.

"So Célestine is in my clutches!" des Lupeaulx said to himself, as he went up to his rooms for a morning toilette.

Parisian households are eaten up with a desire to be in harmony with the luxury which surrounds them on all sides ; those who are wise enough to live as their income prescribes are in a small minority. Perhaps this failing is akin to a very French patriotism, an effort to preserve supremacy in matters of costume for France. France lays down the law to all Europe in fashions, and everybody in the country regards it as a duty to preserve her commercial sceptre, for France rules the fashions if Britain rules the waves. The patriotic fervor which leads the Frenchman to sacrifice everything to "seemliness" (as d'Aubigné* said of Henri III.) causes an immense amount of hard work behind the scenes ; work that absorbs a Parisienne's whole morning, especially if, like Mme. Rabourdin, she tries to live on an income of twelve thousand livres in a style which many wealthier people would not attempt on thirty thousand.

So, every Friday, the day of the weekly dinner-party, Mme. Rabourdin used to assist the housemaid who swept and dusted the rooms, for the cook was dispatched to the market at an early hour, and the manservant was busy cleaning the silver, polishing the glasses, and arranging the table napkins. If any ill-advised caller had escaped the porter's vigilance and climbed the stairs to Mme. Rabourdin's abode, he would have found her in a most unpicturesque disorder. Arrayed in a loose morning-gown, with her feet thrust into a pair of old slippers, and her hair in a careless knot, she was engaged in trimming lamps or arranging flowers, or hastily preparing an unromantic breakfast. If the visitor had not been previously initiated into the mysteries of Paris life, he would certainly learn there and then that it is inexpedient to set foot behind the scenes thereof ; before very long he would be held up as an example, he would be capable of the blackest deeds. A woman surprised in her morning mysteries will talk of his stupidity and indiscretion, till she ruins the intruder. Indul-

* Jean-Henri Merle d'Aubigne, Historian and Theologian.

gent as the Parisienne may be to curiosity that turns to her profit, she is implacable to indiscretion which finds her at a disadvantage. Such a domiciliary visit is not so much an indecent assault, to use the language of the police-courts, as flat burglary, and theft of the dearest treasure of all, to wit, Credit. A woman may have no objection to be discovered half-dressed with her hair about her shoulders; if all her hair is her own, she is a gainer by the incident; but no woman cares to be seen sweeping out her rooms, there is a loss of "seemliness" in it.

Mme. Rabourdin was in the thick of her Friday preparations, and surrounded by provisions fished up from that ocean, the Great Market, when M. des Lupeaulx made his surreptitious call. Truly, the secretary-general was the last person whom the fair Rabourdin expected to see; so hearing his boots creak on the stairs, she cried: "The hairdresser already!" If the sound of the words struck unpleasantly in des Lupeaulx's ears, the sight of des Lupeaulx was not a whit more agreeable to the lady. She took refuge in her bedroom amid a terrible muddle, a perfect Shrovetide assemblage of motley furniture and heterogeneous elegance, which had been pent thither to be out of sight; but the negligent morning-dress proved so alluring that the bold des Lupeaulx followed the frightened fair one. A vague, indescribable something tantalized him; glimpses caught through a half-fastened slip seemed a thousand times more enticing than a full display of every graceful curve, from the line traced round the shoulders by a low velvet bodice to the vanishing point of the prettiest rounded swan-like throat that ever lover kissed before a ball. If your eyes rest on a splendidly developed bust set off by full dress, it suggests a comparison with the elaborate dessert of a great dinner; but the glance that steals under cambrics crumpled by slumber will find dainties there on which to feast, sweets to be relished like the stolen fruit that reddens among the leaves upon the trellis.

"Wait! wait!" cried the fair lady, bolting herself in with her disorder.

She rang for Thérèse, for the cook, for the manservant, for her daughter, imploring a shawl. She longed for stage machinery to shift the scene at the manager's whistle. And the whistle was given and the transformation worked in a hand's turn after all. And behold a new phenomenon! The room took on a piquant air of morning which harmonized with an impromptu toilette, all devised for the great glory of a woman who, in this instance, clearly rose superior to her sex.

"You!" she exclaimed, "and at this hour! What ever can it be?"

"The most serious thing in the world," returned des Lupeaulx. "To-day we must arrive at a clear understanding with each other."

Célestine looked straight through the eyeglasses into the man's thoughts, and understood.

"It is my chief weakness," said she, "to be prodigiously fanciful; I do not mingle politics and affection, for instance; let us talk of politics and business, and afterward we shall see. And beside, this is not a mere whim; it is one consequence of my artistic taste; I cannot put discordant colors or incongruous things together; I shun jarring contrasts. We women have a policy of our own."

Even as she spoke, her pretty ways and the tones of her voice produced their effect; the secretary-general's brutality was giving place to sentimental courtesy. She had recalled him to a sense of what was due from him as a lover. A clever, pretty woman creates her own atmosphere, as it were; nerves are relaxed and sentiments softened in her presence.

"You do not know what is going on," des Lupeaulx returned abruptly, for he tried to persevere in his brutality. "Read that!"

Des Lupeaulx had previously marked the paragraphs in red

ink; he now held out the newspapers to the graceful woman before him. As Célestine read, her shawl slipped open; but she was either unconscious of this or successfully feigned unconsciousness. Des Lupeaulx had reached the age when fancies are the more potent because they pass so swiftly; but if he found it difficult to keep self-control, Célestine also was equally hard put to it.

"What!" said she. "Why, this is dreadful! Who is this Baudoyer?"

"A jackass," returned des Lupeaulx; "but, as you see, he carries the relics, and with a clever hand on the bridle he will reach his goal."

Mme. Rabourdin's debts rose up before her eyes and dazzled her; she seemed to see one lightning flash after another; the blood surged through her veins till her ears rang with the heavy pulse beats; she sat in a stupor, staring with unseeing eyes at a bracket on the wall. Then she turned to des Lupeaulx.

"But you are true to us?" she said, with a glance like a caress, a glance that was meant to bind him to herself.

"That depends," he answered, returning her look with an inquisitive glance that brought the red into the poor woman's face.

"If you insist upon earnest-money, you will lose the full payment," she said with a laugh. "I imagined that you were greater than you are. And as for you, you think I am very small, a mere schoolgirl."

"You did not understand," he said meaningly. "I meant that I cannot serve a man who is going against me, as l'Étourdi thwarts Mascarille."

"What does this mean?"

"This will show you that I am great," he said. And he gave her Dutocq's stolen list, pointing as he did so to her husband's shrewd analysis of his character.

"Read that!"

Célestine recognized the handwriting, read, and turned pale at this bludgeon blow.

"All the departments are in it," added des Lupeaulx.

"But, fortunately, no one but you possesses a copy. I cannot explain it."

"The thief that stole it is not so simple that he would not take a duplicate; he is too great a liar to confess to the copy, and too intelligent in his trade to give it up. I have not even asked him about it."

"Who is he?"

"Your first draughting clerk."

"Dutocq. You are never punished except for doing a kindness. But he is a dog that wants a bone," she added.

"Do you know what a tentative offer has been held out to me, poor devil of a secretary-general that I am?"

"What?"

"I owe a miserable thirty thousand odd francs. You will at once form a very poor opinion of me when you know that I am not more in debt; but, indeed, in this respect, I am small! Well and good. Baudoyer's uncle has just bought up my debts, and is ready, no doubt, to give up my bills to me."

"But all this is infernal."

"Not a bit of it; it is monarchical and religious, for the grand almonry is mixed up in it——"

"What are you going to do?"

"What are your orders?" he asked, holding out a hand with an adorable charm of manner.

To Célestine he was no longer plain, nor old, nor frosted with powder, nor a secretary-general, nor anything unclean; but she did not give him her hand. In her drawing-room she would have allowed him to take it a hundred times in the course of an evening; but such a proceeding in the morning, when they were alone, was as good as a promise; it was rather too decisive—it might lead her further than she meant to go.

"And people say that statesmen have no hearts!" she cried, trying to soften the refusal with a gracious speech. "That frightened me," she added, with the most innocent air in the world.

"What a slander!" returned des Lupeaulx. "One of the most impassive of diplomatists, a man that has kept power ever since he was born, has just married an actress' daughter, and imposed her upon the most rigorous of all Courts in the matter of quarterings."

"And you will support us?"

"I work the nominations. But no trickery."

She held out her hand for him to kiss, and gave him a light tap on the cheek.

"You are mine," she said.

Des Lupeaulx admired that speech. (Indeed, the coxcomb told the story that evening at the opera, after his own fashion, as follows: "A woman did not wish to tell a man that she was his, an admission that a well-bred woman never makes, so she said: 'You are mine!' What do you think of the evasion?")

"But you must be my ally," he began. "Your husband said something to the minister about a scheme of administration, and this list, in which I am handled so gently, is connected with it. Find out, and let me know this evening."

"It shall be done," said she. She saw no great importance in the matter that had brought des Lupeaulx to her house at such an early hour.

"The hairdresser, madame," announced the housemaid.

"He has kept me waiting a very long time!" she said. "I do not know how I should have come through if he had been any later," she thought within herself.

"You do not know how far my devotion goes," said des Lupeaulx, rising to his feet. "You are going to be invited to the countess' next special and intimate party——"

"Oh! you are an angel," she said; "and I see how much you love me. You love me intelligently."

"This evening, dear child, I am going to the opera to find out who these journalists are that are conspiring for Baudoyer; and we will measure weapons."

"Yes, but you will dine here, will you not? I have ordered the things you like."

"All this is so much like love," des Lupeaulx said to himself as he went downstairs, "so much like love, that it would be pleasant to be deceived in such a way for a long while. But if she is laughing at me, I shall find it out. I have the most ingenious of snares ready for her, so that I may read her very heart before I sign. Ah! you kittens, we know you; for, after all, women are just as we are. Twenty-eight years old and virtuous, and here in the Rue Duphot! It is a rare piece of luck which is well worth all the trouble of its cultivation."

And this eligible butterfly fluttered away down the staircase.

"Oh dear! that man yonder without his spectacles must look very funny in his dressing-gown when his hair is powdered!" Célestine was saying to herself meanwhile. "He has the harpoon in his back; he is going to tow me at last to my goal—the minister's house. He has played his part in my comedy."

When Rabourdin at five o'clock came home to dress, his wife went into the room and brought him the list. It seemed like the slipper in the Arabian Nights—the unlucky man was fated to meet it everywhere.

"Who put that in your hands?" Rabourdin asked in amazement.

"Monsieur des Lupeaulx."

"Has he been here?" asked Rabourdin. A guilty woman would surely have turned pale beneath the look that he

gave her, but his wife met it with marble brows and laughing eyes.

"Yes, and he is coming here again to dinner," said she. "Why do you look so horrified?"

"Dear," said Rabourdin, "I have given des Lupeaulx mortal offense. Men of that sort never forgive; and he is caressing me! Do you think that I cannot see why?"

"It seems to me that he has a very discriminating taste," she said. "I cannot blame him for it. After all, I know of nothing more flattering to a woman's vanity than the knowledge that she stimulates a jaded palate."

"A truce to jesting, Célestine! Spare an overburdened man. I cannot speak with the minister, and my honor is at stake."

"Oh dear, no! Dutocq shall have the promise of a place, and you will be head of the division."

"I see what you mean, darling," said Rabourdin; "but you are playing a game that is quite as dishonoring as if you meant it in earnest. A lie is a lie, and an honest woman cannot——"

"Pray let me make use of the weapons that they turn against us."

"Célestine, when that man sees how foolishly he has fallen into the snare set for him, he will be all the more furious against me."

"And how if I upset him?"

Rabourdin stared at his wife in amazement.

"I am only thinking of your advancement," continued Célestine, "and it is time I did so, my poor love. But you are taking the sporting-dog for the game," she added after a pause. "In a few days' time des Lupeaulx will have fulfilled his mission very sufficiently. While you are trying to say a word to the minister, and before you can do so much as see him, I shall have had a talk with him. You have strained every nerve to bring out this scheme that you have kept from

me ; and in three months your wife will have done more than you have done in six years. Tell me about this great project of yours."

So Rabourdin, as he shaved himself, began to explain his scheme, first obtaining a promise that his wife would not say a single word of his work ; warning her, at the same time, that to give des Lupeaulx any idea of it would be to give the cream-jug to the cat. But at the fifth sentence Célestine interrupted him.

"Rabourdin, why did you not speak to me about it?" she said. "Why, you would have saved yourself useless trouble. I can imagine that one may be blinded by an idea for a minute ; but for six or seven years !—that I cannot conceive. You want to reduce the estimates ? It is a commonplace, penny-wise economy ! Rather we should aim at raising the income to two milliards. France would be twice as great. A new system would be this plan cried up by Monsieur de Nucingen, a loan that would send an impulse through trade throughout the whole country. The poorest exchequer is the one that has most francs lying idle. It is the finance minister's mission to fling money out of the windows, and it comes in at his cellars. And you would have him accumulate specie ! Why, instead of reducing the number of posts under Government, you ought to increase them ! Instead of paying off the national debt, you should increase the number of fund-holders. If the Bourbons mean to reign in peace, they ought to have fund-holders in every township ; and, of all things, they should beware of raising foreign loans, for foreigners will be sure some day to require the repayment of the capital, whereas if none but Frenchmen have money invested in the Funds, neither France nor national credit will perish. *That* saved England. This plan of yours is a little store-keeper's scheme. An ambitious man should only present himself in the character of a second Law, without Law's ill-luck ; he should explain the resources of credit ; he should

show that we ought not to sink money in extinguishing principal, but in payment of interest, as the English do——”

“Come, Célestine,” said Rabourdin, “jumble up ideas together, make playthings of them, and contradict yourself! I am used to it. But do not criticise a piece of work before you know what it is.”

“Is there any need to know what it is, when the gist of the matter is to carry on the administration in France with six thousand officials instead of twenty thousand? Why, my dear, even if the scheme were invented by a man of genius, a King of France would lose his crown if he attempted to carry it into effect. You may subjugate an aristocracy by striking off a few heads, but you cannot quell a hydra with a thousand claws. No, no; insignificant folk cannot be crushed, they lie too flat beneath the foot. And do you mean to move all these men through the ministers? Between ourselves, they are very poor creatures. You may shift men’s interests, you cannot shift men; they make too much outcry, whereas the francs are dumb.”

“But, Célestine, if you talk all the time, and if you aim your wit wide of the mark, we shall never arrive at an understanding——”

“Ah! I see the drift of that analysis of men’s administrative ability,” she went on, without listening to her husband. “Goodness, you have been sharpening the axe for yourself. Sainte-Vierge! why did you not consult me? I would at any rate have prevented you from putting a single line on paper; or at the worst, if you wished to have the memorandum, I would have copied it myself, and it should never have left this house. Oh! dear, why did you say nothing to me about it? Just like a man! A man can sleep beside his wife and keep a secret for seven years! He can hide himself from her, poor thing, for seven years and doubt her devotion.”

“But,” protested Rabourdin, “whenever I have tried to discuss anything with you, for these eleven years, you have

cut me short, and immediately brought out your own ideas instead. You know nothing of my work."

"Nothing? I know all about it."

"Then, pray, tell me about it," cried Rabourdin, losing his temper for the first time since his marriage.

"There! it is half-past six; shave yourself and dress," she retorted, answering him after the wont of women when pressed upon a point on which they are bound to be silent; "I will finish dressing, and we will postpone the argument, for I do not want to be worried on my reception day. Oh, dear me, poor man," she said to herself as she went, "to think that he should toil for seven years to bring about his own ruin! And put no trust in his wife!"

She turned back.

"If you had listened to me in time," she said, "you would not have interfered on behalf of your first clerk; he, no doubt, took the copies of that unlucky list. Farewell, clever man!"

But seeing her husband's pain in his tragic attitude, she felt that she had gone too far; she sprang to him, and put her handsome arms about him lovingly, all covered with soap as he was.

"Dear Xavier, do not be vexed," she said, "this evening we will go through your scheme; you shall talk at your ease, and I am going to listen as long and as attentively as you please! Is that nice of me? There, I do not ask better than to be Mahomet's wife."

She began to laugh, and Rabourdin could not help laughing too, for Célestine's mouth was white with soap, while there was a wealth of the truest and most perdurable affection in the tones of her voice.

"Go and dress, little one; and of all things, not a word of this to des Lupeaulx! Give me your promise. That is the only penance I require——"

"*Require?* Then I won't make any promise at all."

"Come, Célestine, I spoke seriously though I was joking."

"To-night your secretary-general will know the foes with whom we must fight ; and I know whom to attack."

"Whom?" asked Rabourdin.

"The minister," she said, growing two feet taller for her words.

But in spite of Célestine's winning charm, a few painful thoughts occurred to Rabourdin in spite of himself, and darkened his forehead.

"When will she learn to appreciate me?" he thought. "She did not even understand that all this work was done for her sake. What waywardness! and how intelligent she is! If I were not married, I should be very well off and in a high position by this time. I should have put by five thousand francs a year out of my salary; and by investing the money carefully, I should have an independent income of ten thousand francs at this day. I should be a bachelor; I should stand a chance to become somebody, through a marriage—Yes" (he interrupted himself), "but I have Célestine and the two children."

He fell back upon his happiness. Even in the happiest married life, there must always be some moments of regret.

He went to the drawing-room and looked round.

"There are not two women in Paris who can manage as she does. All this on twelve thousand livres a year!" he thought, as he glanced at the jars full of flowers, and thought of the coming pleasure of gratified vanity. "She was meant to be a minister's wife. And when I think that my minister's wife is of no use to him—she looks like a stout, homely housewife—and when she goes to the Tuileries, to other people's houses, she——"

He compressed his lips. A very busy man's ideas of housekeeping are so vague that it is easy to persuade him to believe that a hundred thousand francs will do everything or nothing.

But though des Lupeaulx was impatiently expected, though

the dinner had been designed to tickle the palate of a professed epicure, he only came in at midnight, at which hour conversation is wont to grow more personal and confidential. Andoche Finot, journalist, was there likewise.

“I know all about it,” began des Lupeaulx, when he was comfortably settled on the settee by the fireside, with a cup of tea in his hand; and Mme. Rabourdin stood before him holding out a plate full of sandwiches and slices of the weighty substance not inappropriately known as pound-cake. “Finot, my dear and intelligent friend, you may do our gracious Queen a service by letting loose some of your pack on some men whom I am going to mention.” Then turning to M. Rabourdin, and lowering his voice so that the words should not travel beyond the three persons to whom they were addressed, he continued—“You have the money-lenders and the clergy, capital and the church, against you. The paragraph in the Liberal paper was inserted at the instance of an old bill-discounter; the proprietors lay under some obligation to him, and the little fellow that actually did it did not think that it mattered very much. The whole staff of the paper is to be reconstituted in three days; we shall get over that. The Royalist Opposition (for, thanks to Monsieur de Chateaubriand, we now have a Royalist Opposition, which is to say, that there are Royalists half-way over to the Liberals; but do not let us talk of mighty matters in politics)—the Royal Opposition, I say, hating Charles X. with a deadly hate, have promised their support to you if we will pass one of their amendments. All my batteries are in the field. If they try to force Baudoyer upon us, we will say to the grand almonry: ‘Such and such newspapers and Messrs. So-and-So will attack this law that you want to pass, and you will have the whole press against you’ (for the Ministerial papers under my control shall be deaf and dumb; and as they are pretty much deaf and dumb already—eh, Finot?—that will give them no difficulty). ‘Nominate Rabourdin, and you will have public opinion with

you.' To think of the poor simple provincials that intrench themselves in their armchairs by the fireside and rejoice over the independence of the spirited organs of public opinion ! Ha ! ha ! "

"He ! he ! he ! " chuckled Finot.

"So be quite easy," continued des Lupeaulx. "I arranged it all this evening. The grand almonry will give way."

"I would rather have given up all hope and have had you here at dinner," Célestine whispered, and the look of reproach in her eyes might easily have been taken for a love-distraught glance.

"Here is something that will obtain my pardon," returned he, and he gave her the invitation for the party on Tuesday. Célestine's face lighted up with the reddest glow of pleasure, as she opened the envelope. No delight can be compared with the joy of vanity triumphant.

"Do you know what a Tuesday is?" continued des Lupeaulx, with an air of mystery ; "it is an inner circle ; it is to our department what the petit-château is to the Court. You will be in the very centre. The Comtesse Féraud will be there (she is still in favor in spite of the death of Louis XVIII.) ; Delphine de Nucingen, Mme. de Listomère, and the Marquise d'Espard are invited, so is your dear de Camps ; I sent the invitation myself, so that you might find a supporter in her in case the other women should 'black-ball' you. I should like to see you among them."

Célestine tossed her head ; she looked like a thoroughbred before the race. Again she read the card, as Baudoyer and Saillard had read their paragraphs in the paper ; and, like them, she could not grasp the meaning of the words.

"This first, and some day the Tuileries ! " she said, turning to des Lupeaulx with such ambition and confidence in her tone and manner that she struck dismay into him as he looked at her.

"How if I should only be a stepping-stone for her?" he asked himself.

He rose to his feet and went to her bedroom; she followed, for she understood by his sign that he wished to speak with her in private.

"Well, and the scheme?" he began.

"Pooh! an honest man's folly! He wants to put down fifteen thousand employés and keep a staff of five or six thousand. You could not imagine a more monstrous absurdity; I will give you his memoranda to read when they are copied out. He is quite in earnest. He made his analytical catalogue with the best of motives. The poor, dear man!"

Des Lupeaulx felt the more reassured because genuine laughter accompanied the light contemptuous words; a lie would not have deceived him, he was too old a hand, but Célestine was sincere while she thus spoke.

"But, after all, there is something at the bottom of it all," he rejoined.

"Oh, well, he wants to do away with the land-tax and replace it by a tax upon articles of consumption."

"Why, François Keller and Nucingen brought forward an almost identical plan a year ago; and the minister is thinking of removing the burden from the land."

"There! I told him that there was nothing new in the idea," laughed Célestine.

"Yes; but if he and the great financier of the age, the Napoleon of finance (I can say so between ourselves), if he and Nucingen have hit upon the same idea, he must at any rate have some notion of the way of carrying it out."

"The whole thing is commonplace," she said, pursing up her lips disdainfully. "He wants to govern France (just think of it!) with five or six thousand employés; when, on the contrary, it ought to be to the interest of every person in the country to maintain the present government."

Des Lupeaulx seemed relieved to find that the chief clerk,

whom he took for a man of extraordinary ability, was a mediocrity after all.

"Are you quite sure of the appointment? Do you care to take a piece of woman's advice?" asked she.

"You women understand the art of polite treachery better than we do," said des Lupeaulx, shaking his head.

"Very well; say 'Baudoyer' at Court and at the Grand Almonry, so as to lull suspicion; but at the last moment write 'Rabourdin.'"

"Some women say 'Yes' so long as they need a man, and 'No' when he has served their turn," remarked des Lupeaulx.

"I know them," Célestine answered, laughing. "But they are very silly, for in politics you must come across the same people again and again. It is all very well with fools, but you are a clever man. In my opinion, it is the greatest possible mistake in life to quarrel with a really clever man."

"No," said des Lupeaulx, "for he will forgive. There is no danger except with petty rancorous minds that have nothing to do but plan revenge, and I spend my life on that."

When every one had gone, Rabourdin stayed in his wife's room, begged her to listen to him for once, and took the opportunity of explaining his scheme. He made her understand that he had no intention of diminishing the estimates; on the contrary, he gave a list of public enterprises to be carried out with the public money; private enterprise or local improvements should be subsidized by a government grant of one-third or one-fourth of the total outlay, and these grants would set money in circulation. In short, he made it plain to his wife that his scheme was not so much a theory on paper as a practicable plan to be worked out in hundreds of ways. Célestine's enthusiasm grew; she sprang to her husband and put her arms about him, and sat on his knee beside the fire.

"And so, after all," she said, "I have found the husband

of whom I dreamed. My ignorance of your worth saved you from des Lupeaulx's clutches. I slandered you to him amazingly, and in good earnest too."

There were happy tears in Rabourdin's eyes. And so at last he had his day of triumph. He had undertaken it all to please his wife; he was a great man in the eyes of his public!

"And for any one who knows how good and kind and loving and equable you are, you are ten times greater! But a man of genius is always more or less of a child, and you are a child," she said, "a dearly loved child."

She drew out her invitation card from its hiding-place and showed it to him—

"This is what I wanted," she continued. "Des Lupeaulx has brought me in contact with his excellency, and his excellency shall be my servant for a while, even if he is made of bronze."

Next day Célestine was absorbed in preparation for her introduction into the inner circle. It was to be her great day, her success. Never did courtesan take more pains with herself than this matron took. Never was dressmaker more tormented, more sensible how much depends upon her art. Mme. Rabourdin overlooked nothing, in short. She went herself to choose a carriage for the occasion, so that her carriage should be neither old-fashioned, nor insolent, nor suggestive of the city madame. Her servant, as became the servant of a good house, was to look like a gentleman.

Then, about ten o'clock on the great Tuesday evening, Mme. Rabourdin emerged in an exquisite mourning toilet. In her hair she wore bunches of jet grapes, of the finest workmanship, part of a complete set of ornaments ordered at Fossin's by an Englishwoman who went away without taking them. The leaves were thin flakes of stamped iron, light as real vine-leaves, and the artist had not forgotten the little graceful tendrils that clung among her curls, as the vine-tendrils cling to every branch. The bracelets and earrings

were of "Berlin iron," as it is called ; but the delicate arabesques from Vienna might have been made by the hands of fairies for some task-mistress, some Carabosse with a passion for collecting ants' eyes, or for spinning pieces of stuff to pack into a hazelnut. Célestine's dress had been carefully cut to bring out all the grace of a slender figure, which looked yet more slender in black. The curves all stopped short at the line round the neck, for she wore no shoulder-straps ; at every movement she seemed about to emerge like a butterfly from the sheath ; yet, through the dressmaker's skill, the gown clung to the lines of her figure. The material was not yet known in Paris ; it was a *mousseline de laine*, an "adorable" stuff that afterward became the rage. Indeed, the success outlasted the fashion in France ; for the practical advantages of a thin woolen material, which saves the expense of washing, injured the cotton-spinning industry and revolutionized the Rouen trade. Célestine's feet were daintily shod in Turkey satin slippers (for bright satin could not be worn in mourning) and fine thin stockings.

Célestine looked very lovely thus dressed. Her complexion was brilliant and softly colored, thanks to the reviving influence of a bran bath. Hope had flooded her eyes, her quick intelligence sparkled in them ; she looked like the woman of a superior order, of whom des Lupeaulx spoke with such pride and pleasure. She knew how to enter a room ; all women will appreciate the meaning of that phrase. She bowed gracefully to the minister's wife, deference and dignity blended in the right proportion in her manner ; and wore her air of majesty without giving offense, for every fair woman is a queen. With the minister she used the pretty insolence that women are wont to assume with any male creature, were he a grand-duke. And as she took her seat, she reconnoitred the ground. She found herself in a small, carefully chosen circle in which women can measure each other and form accurate judgments ; the lightest word reverberates in all ears, every

glance makes an impression, and conversation becomes a duel before witnesses. Any remark pitched in the ordinary key sounds flat ; and good talk is quietly accepted as a matter of course at that intellectual level. Rabourdin betook himself to an adjoining card-room, and there remained, planted on both feet, to watch the play, which proves that he was not wanting in sense.

"My dear," said the Marquise d'Espard, turning to the Comtesse Féraud,* Louis XVIII.'s last mistress, "Paris is unique. Such women as these start up in it quite unexpectedly from no one knows where, and seemingly they have the will and the power to do anything——"

"And she has the will and the power to do anything," said des Lupeaulx, bridling as he spoke.

The crafty Célestine, meanwhile, was paying court to the minister's wife. Drilled by des Lupeaulx on the previous day, she knew all the countess' weaknesses and flattered them, without seeming to touch upon them. And she was silent too at the right moment ; for des Lupeaulx, in spite of his infatuation, had noticed Célestine's shortcomings, and warned her against them. "Of all things, do not talk too much !" he had said the evening before. 'Twas an extraordinary proof of attachment. Bertrand Barrère left behind him the sublime maxim : "Never interrupt a woman with advice while she is dancing ;" which, with the supplementary apophthegm here subjoined : "Do not find fault with a woman for scattering her pearls," may be said to complete this article of the code feminine. The conversation became general. From time to time Mme. Rabourdin put in a word, much as a well-trained cat touches her mistress' lace with sheathed claws. The minister's heart was not very susceptible ; in the matter of gallantry, no statesman of the Restoration was more accomplished ; the Opposition "*Miroir*," the "*Pandore*," and the "*Figaro*" could not reproach him with the faintest acceleration of the

* Wife of "Colonel Chabert," which see.

pulse. His mistress was "L'Étoile;" strange to say, she had been faithful in adversity, and probably was reaping the benefit even at that moment. This Mme. Rabourdin knew, but she knew also that people change their minds in old castles, so she set herself to make the minister jealous of such good fortune as des Lupeaulx appeared to enjoy. At that moment des Lupeaulx was expatiating upon Célestine, for the benefit of the Marquise d'Espard, Mme. de Nucingen, and the countess; he was trying to make them understand that Mme. Rabourdin must be admitted into their coalition; and Mme. de Camps, the fourth in the quartette of listeners, was supporting him. At the end of an hour the minister had been well stroked down; he was pleased with Mme. Rabourdin's wit, and she had charmed his wife; indeed, the countess was so enchanted with this siren that she had just asked her to come whenever she pleased.

"For your husband will very soon be head of the division, my dear," she had said, "and the minister intends to bring both the divisions under one head, and then you will be one of us."

His excellency took Mme. Rabourdin to see one of the rooms. His suite of apartments was famous in those days, for Opposition journalism had made itself ridiculous by denouncing the lavish display therein. He gave his arm to the lady.

"Indeed, madame, you really ought to favor us, the countess and myself, by coming frequently——" and his excellency brought out his ministerial pretty but meaningless speeches.

"But, monseigneur," demurred Célestine, with one of the glances that women keep for emergencies; "but, monseigneur, that depends upon you, it seems to me."

"How?"

"Why, you can give me the right to do so."

"Explain yourself."

"No. When I came here, I said to myself that I would not have the bad taste to solicit your interest."

"Pray, speak! *Placets* of this sort are never out of place," the minister answered, laughing. "And," he added, "nothing amuses your seriously minded men so much as this kind of nonsense."

"Very well; it is rather absurd of a chief clerk's wife to come here often, but a director's wife would not be 'out of place.'"

"Never mind that," said the minister, "we cannot do without your husband; he has been nominated."

"Really and truly?"

"Will you come to my study and see his name for yourself? The thing is done."

It seemed to her that there was something suspicious in the minister's eagerness and alacrity.

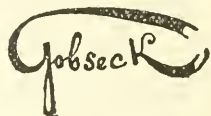
"Well," she said, as they stood apart in a corner, "let me tell you that I can repay you——"

She was on the point of unfolding her husband's scheme, when des Lupeaulx came forward on tiptoe with an angry little cough, which, being interpreted, meant that he had been listening to their conversation, and did not wish to be found out. The minister looked in no pleasant humor at the elderly coxcomb thus caught in a trap. Des Lupeaulx had hurried on the work of the staff beyond all reason, in his impatience for his conquest; he had put it in the minister's hands, and next day he intended to bring the nomination to her who passed for his mistress.

Just at that moment the minister's footman came, and with a mysterious air informed des Lupeaulx that his own man had brought a letter to be delivered to him immediately, adding that it was of great importance.

The secretary-general went to a lamp and read a missive thus conceived :

“Contrary to my habit, I am waiting in an antechamber; there is not a moment to lose if you mean to arrange with your servant

A stylized, cursive handwritten signature that reads "Gobseck". The letters are tightly packed and fluid, with a prominent loop at the end of the word.

The secretary-general shuddered at the sight of that signature. It would be a pity not to give a facsimile of it, for it is rare on the market, and should be valuable to those persons who discover character in handwriting. If ever hieroglyph represented an animal, surely this name, with its initial and final letter, suggests the voracious insatiable jaws of a shark, jaws that are always agape, always catching hold of the strong and the weak alike, and gobbling them down. It has been found impossible to reproduce the whole note in facsimile, for the handwriting, though clear, is too small and close and fine; the whole sentence, indeed, only fills one line. The spirit of bill-discounting alone could inspire so insolently imperative, so cruelly irreproachable a sentence; an explicit yet non-committal statement, which told all yet revealed nothing. If you had never heard of Gobseck before, you might have guessed what manner of man it was that wrote that line; and seen the implacable money-lender of the Rue des Grès, who could summons you into his presence without sending an order. Accordingly, des Lupeaulx straightway disappeared, like a dog when the sportsman calls him off the scent; and went to his own abode, pondering by the way. His whole position seemed to be compromised. Picture to yourself the sensations of a general-in-chief when his aide-de-camp announces that “the enemy with thirty thousand men, all fresh troops, is taking us in flank.” A word will explain the arrival of Messieurs Gigonnet and Gobseck upon the field; for both those worthies were waiting upon des Lupeaulx.

At eight o'clock that evening, Martin Falleix had arrived on the wings of the wind (thanks to three francs per stage and

a postillion sent on ahead). He had brought the contracts, which all bore yesterday's date. Mitral took the documents at once to the Café Thémis; they were duly handed over, and the two money-lenders hurried over to des Lupeaulx. They went on foot, however. The clock struck eleven.

Des Lupeaulx shuddered as he watched the two sinister-looking faces light up with a gleeful expression, and saw a look that shot out straight as a bullet and blazed like the flash of powder.

"Well, my masters, what is the matter?"

The two money-lenders sat motionless and impassive. Gigonnet glanced from his bundle of papers to the manservant.

"Let us go into my study," said des Lupeaulx, dismissing the man with a sign.

"You understand French admirably," remarked Gigonnet.

"Have you come to torment a man that put you in the way of making two hundred thousand francs apiece?" asked des Lupeaulx, and in spite of himself his gesture was disdainful.

"And will put us in the way of making more, I hope," said Gigonnet.

"Is it a bit of business? If you want me, I have a memory."

"And we have memoranda of yours," riposted Gigonnet.

"My debts will be paid," des Lupeaulx returned loftily. He did not wish to be led into a discussion on the subject.

"Truly?" asked Gobseck.

"Let us go to the point, my son," said Gigonnet. "Don't you draw yourself up in your stock like that; it won't do with us. Take these contracts and read them through."

Des Lupeaulx read with surprise and amazement; angels might have flung those contracts down from the clouds for him; and meanwhile the pair took stock of his room.

"You have a couple of intelligent men of business in us, haven't you?" asked Gigonnet.

"But to what do I owe such ingenious coöperation?" des Lupeaulx inquired uneasily.

"We knew a week ago, what you will not know till to-morrow unless we tell you: the president of the Commercial Court finds that he is obliged to resign his seat in the Chamber."

Des Lupeaulx's eyes dilated till they grew as large as meadow daisies.

"Your minister was playing this trick upon you," added Gobseck, the curt-spoken.

"You are my masters," said des Lupeaulx, saluting the pair with a profound respect in which there was a certain tinge of irony.

"Precisely," said Gobseck.

"But are you about to strangle me?"

"That is possible."

"Very well, then; set about it, you executioners!" returned the secretary-general with a smile.

"Your debts," began Gigonnet, "are inscribed along with the loan of the purchase-money, you see."

"Here are the deeds," added Gobseck, as he drew a bundle of documents from the pocket of his faded greatcoat.

"And you have three years to pay the lot," said Gigonnet.

"But what do you want?" asked des Lupeaulx, much alarmed by so much readiness to oblige, and such a fancy settlement.

"La Billardière's place for Baudoyer," Gigonnet answered quickly.

"It is a very small thing," returned des Lupeaulx, "though I should have to do the impossible. I myself have tied my hands."

"You are going to gnaw the cords with your teeth," said Gigonnet.

"They are sharp enough!" added Gobseck.

"Is that all?"

"We shall keep the contracts until these claims are admitted," said Gigonnet, laying a statement under the secretary-general's eyes as he spoke; "if these are not recognized

within six days by the committee, my name will be written instead of yours on the deeds."

"You are clever," exclaimed des Lupeaulx.

"Precisely," said Gobseck.

"And that is all?"

"True," replied Gobseck.

"Is it a bargain?" demanded Gigonnet.

Des Lupeaulx nodded.

"Very well, then, sign this power of attorney," said Gigonnet. "Baudoyer's nomination in two days; the admission of the claims in six; and——"

"And what?"

"We guarantee you——"

"What?" cried des Lupeaulx, more and more astonished.

"*Your* nomination," replied Gigonnet, swelling with pride.

"We are secure of a majority; fifty-two tenant-farmers and tradesmen are ready to vote at the election as the lender of money may direct."

Des Lupeaulx grasped Gobseck's hand.

"We are the only people among whom misapprehensions are impossible. This is what you may call business. So I will throw in a make-weight."

"Precisely" (from Gobseck).

"What is it to be?" asked Gigonnet.

"The cross for your oaf of a nephew."

"Good!" said Gigonnet. "You know him."

With that the pair took their leave. Des Lupeaulx went with them to the stairs.

"Those are secret envoys from some foreign power!" said the footmen among themselves.

Out in the street the money-lenders looked in each other's faces by the light of a lamp and laughed.

"He will have to pay us nine thousand francs per annum in the shape of interest, and the land scarcely brings in five thousand net," cried Gigonnet.

"He will be in our hands for a long while to come," said Gobseck.

"He will begin to build; he will do foolish things," returned Gigonnet. "Falleix will buy the land."

"He wants to be a deputy; the wolf* laughs at the rest."

"Eh! eh!"

"Eh! eh!"

The dry chirping exclamations did duty for laughter. The usurers returned on foot to the Café Thémis.

Des Lupeaulx went back to the drawing-room and found Mme. Rabourdin in all her glory. She was charming. The minister's countenance, usually so melancholy, had relaxed and grown gracious.

"She is working miracles," des Lupeaulx said to himself. "What an invaluable woman! One must probe to the bottom of her heart."

"Your little lady will decidedly do very well indeed," said the marquise; "she wants nothing but your name."

"Yes, she is an auctioneer's daughter, it is the one thing against her; her want of birth will be the ruin of her." Des Lupeaulx's air of cool indifference contrasted strangely with his warmth of a few minutes ago.

The Marquise d'Espard looked steadily back at him.

"The glance you gave them just now was not lost upon me," she said, indicating the minister and Mme. Rabourdin; "it pierced through the mist of your eyeglasses. You are amusing, you two, to quarrel over that bone."

As the marquise made her way past the door, the minister hurried across the room to her.

"Well," said des Lupeaulx, addressing Mme. Rabourdin, "what do you think of our minister?"

"He is charming. Really," she added, raising her voice for the benefit of his excellency's wife, "really, the poor ministers must be known to be appreciated. The minor news-

* Le loup.

papers and the slanders of the Opposition give one such distorted ideas of politicians, and in the end one is influenced. But the prejudice turns in their favor when you meet them."

"He is very pleasant."

"Well, I can assure you that one could be very fond of him," she returned good-humoredly.

"Dear child," said des Lupeaulx, assuming a good-natured and ingratiating air, "you have achieved the impossible."

"What?" asked she.

"You have raised the dead to life, I did not think that he had a heart; ask his wife! He has just enough to defray a passing fancy, but take advantage of it. Come this way; do not be surprised."

He led the way to the boudoir and sat down beside her on a sofa.

"You are crafty," he said, "and I like you the better for it. Between ourselves, you are no ordinary woman. Des Lupeaulx introduced you here, and there is an end of him; is it not so? And beside, when we decide to love for interest, a minister of seventy is to be preferred to a secretary-general of forty; it pays better, and is less irksome. I wear eye-glasses, and my hair is powdered, and I am the worse for a life of pleasure; a romantic love affair it would be! Oh! I have told myself all this. If one absolutely must, one makes some concession to the useful, but I shall never be the agreeable, shall I? A man in my position would be mad if he did not look at it from all sides. You can confess the truth, and show me the bottom of your heart. We are two partners, not two lovers; are we not? If there is some fancy on my side, you rise superior to such trifles; you will pass it over in me; you are not a little boarding-school miss, nor a tradesman's wife from the Rue Saint-Denis. Pooh! we are above that, you and I. There is the Marquise d'Espard, now leaving the room, do you suppose that she thinks otherwise? We came to an understanding two years ago" (the coxcomb!),

“and now she has only to write me a line, and not a very long one—‘My dear des Lupeaulx, you will oblige me by doing so-and-so’—and the thing is done forthwith. We are thinking of bringing a petition for a commission in lunacy on her husband. You women can have anything that you will at the cost of pleasure. Well, then, dear child, take his excellency with your wiles; I will help you, it is to my interest so to do. Yes, I should like to have him under a woman’s influence; he would never slip through my fingers then, as he sometimes does, and naturally, for I only keep a hold on his commonsense, but with a pretty woman to help me, I should have him on his weak side, and that is the surest. So let us be good friends as before, and divide the credit that you will gain.” Mme. Rabourdin heard this singular profession of rascality with the utmost astonishment. The barefaced simplicity of the political business transaction put any idea of expressing surprise quite out of the question. She fell into the snare.

“Do you think that I have made an impression upon him?” she asked.

“I know you have, I am sure of it.”

“Is it true that Rabourdin’s appointment is signed?” asked Célestine.

“I put the report before him this morning. But it is nothing to be the head of the division; he must be master of requests.”

“Yes.”

“Very well, go in again and flirt with his excellency.”

“Indeed,” she said, “I never really knew you till to-night. There is nothing commonplace about you.”

“And so, we are two old friends, and there is an end of tender airs and tiresome love-making; we understand things as they used to do under the Regency; they had plenty of sense in those days.”

“You are in truth a great man, I admire you,” she said,

smiling at him as she held out her hand. "You shall know that a woman does more for her friend than for her——"

She left the sentence unfinished and went.

"Dear little thing! Des Lupeaulx need feel no remorse over turning against you," said her companion, as he watched her cross the room to the minister. "To-morrow evening when you hand me a cup of tea, you will offer me something else which I shall not care to take. There is no more to be said. Ah! when you come to your fortieth year, women take you in; it is too late to be loved."

Des Lupeaulx also went back to the drawing-room, scanned himself in a mirror, and knew that he was a very fine fellow for political purposes, but unmistakably superannuated for the court of Cytherea. Mme. Rabourdin meanwhile was working up her climax; she meditated taking her departure, and did her best to leave a last pleasing impression upon every one present. She succeeded. An unwonted exclamation of "Charming woman!" broke from every one as soon as she had gone, and the fascinated minister went with her to the farthest door.

"I am quite sure that you will think of me to-morrow," he said, alluding to the nomination. "I am quite satisfied with our acquisition, not many high officials have such charming wives," he added, as he came back to the room.

"Do you not think that she is inclined to encroach a little?" des Lupeaulx began. He seemed rather put out.

The women exchanged meaning glances; the rivalry between the secretary-general and the minister amused them. And forthwith they began one of those charming mystifications in which the Parisienne excels. They all began to talk about Mme. Rabourdin; they stirred up the minister and des Lupeaulx. One lady thought Mme. Rabourdin too studied, she aimed too much at wit; another began to compare the graces of the bourgeoisie with the manners of persons of fashion, criticising Célestine by implication; and des Lupeaulx defended

the mistress attributed to him, but his defense was of a kind reserved exclusively in polite society for absent enemies.

"Pray be fair to her, mesdames. Is it not an extraordinary thing that an auctioneer's daughter should be so charming? You see where she comes from, and where she is; and she will go to the Tuileries, she is aiming at that, she told me so."

"And if she is an auctioneer's daughter," said Mme. d'Espard, smiling over her words, "how should that injure her husband's prospects?"

"As times are, you mean?" asked the minister's wife, pursing up her lips.

"Madame," the minister said sternly, turning on the marquise, "such language brings on revolutions, and, unfortunately, the Court spares no one. You would not believe how much the heedlessness of the upper classes displeases certain clear-sighted persons at the château. If I were a great lord, instead of a little provincial of good family, set here, as it would seem, to do your business for you, the Monarchy should rest on a firmer basis than it does at present. What will be the end if the throne cannot shed its lustre upon its representatives? We are far, indeed, from the times when the King's will ennobled a Louvois, a Colbert, a Richelieu, a Jeannin, a Villeroy, or a Sully. Yes, Sully in the beginning was nothing more than I. I speak in this way because we are among ourselves, and I should be small, indeed, if I took offense at such trifles. It rests with us, and not with others, to make a great name for ourselves."

"You have the appointment, dear," said Célestine, squeezing her husband's hand. "If it had not been for des Lupeaulx, I would have explained your project to the minister; but that must be left till next Tuesday now, and you will be master of requests all the sooner."

There is one day in every woman's life in which she shines

in all her glory—a day that she remembers, and loves to remember, as long as she lives. As Mme. Rabourdin undid her artfully adjusted ornaments one by one, she went over that evening again, and reckoned it among the glorious days of her life. All her beauty had been jealously noted; the minister's wife had paid her compliments (she was not ill-pleased to praise the new-comer at the expense of her friends); and more than all, satisfied vanity had redounded to her husband's advantage. Xavier's appointment had been made!

"Did I not look well to-night?" she asked her husband, as though there were any need to kindle his admiration.

At that very moment Mitral at the Café Thémis saw the two usurers come in. Their impassive faces gave no sign.

"How are we getting on?" he asked when they sat down to the table.

"Oh, well, as usual," said Gigonnet, rubbing his hands; "victory is on the side of the francs."

"That is so," remarked Gobseck.

Mitral lost no time. He took a coach and drove away with the news. The game of boston had been long drawn out that night at the Saillards, but every one had left except the Abbé Gaudron. Falleix had gone to bed; he was tired out.

"You will get the appointment, nephew, and there is a surprise in store for you."

"What?" asked Saillard.

"The cross!" cried Mitral.

"God is with those that care for His altars!" commented Gaudron.

And thus was the *Te Deum* chanted with equal joy in either camp.

Next day was Friday. M. Rabourdin was to go to the minister, for he had done the work of the head of the division ever since the late La Billardiére fell ill. On these occasions the clerks were remarkably punctual, the office-messengers

zealous and attentive, for on signature days the offices are all in a flurry. Why and wherefore? Nobody knows. The three messengers accordingly were all at their posts; they flattered themselves that fees of some sort would come their way, for rumors of M. Rabourdin's appointment had been spread abroad on the previous day by des Lupeaulx. So Uncle Antoine and Laurent were in full dress at a quarter to eight when the secretary's messenger came over with a note, asking Antoine to give it, in private to M. Dutocq. The secretary-general had bidden him take it round to the first clerk's house at seven o'clock. "And I don't know how it happened, old man, but I slept on and on, and I am only just awake now. He would give me an infernal blowing up if he knew that the note had not gone to the private address; 'stead of which I shall tell him as how I took it to Monsieur Dutocq's. It is a great secret, Daddy Antoine. Don't say anything to the clerks; or, my word, he would turn me away. I should lose my place if I said a word about it, he said."

"Why, what is there inside it?"

"Nothing; for I looked into it, like this—there!"

He pressed open the folded sheet, but they could only see white paper inside.

"To-day is a great day for you, Laurent," continued the secretary's messenger. "You are going to have a new director. They will retrench beyond a doubt, and put both divisions under one director; messengers may look out!"

"Yes! nine clerks pensioned off," said Dutocq, coming up at the moment. "How came you fellows to know that?"

Antoine handed over the letter, Dutocq opened it, and rushed headlong down the staircase to the secretary's rooms.

Since the day of M. de la Billardiére's death, the Rabourdins and Baudoyers had settled down by degrees into their wonted ways and the *dolce-far-niente* habits of administrative routine. There had been plenty of gossip at first; but an

access of industry usually sets in among the clerks toward the end of the year, and the doorkeepers and messengers become more unctuously obsequious about the same time. Everybody was punctual of a morning, and more faces might be seen in the office after four o'clock; for the bonus at the New Year is apt to depend upon the final impression left on the mind of your chief. Then rumor said that the La Billardiére and Clergeot divisions were to be brought under one head. The news had caused a flutter in the department on the previous day. The number of clerks to be dismissed was known, but no one knew their names as yet. It was pretty certain that Poiret would not be replaced—they would effect an economy over his salary. Young La Billardiére had gone. Two new supernumeraries were coming, and both were sons of deputies—an appalling circumstance. These tidings had arrived just as they were going away. It struck terror into every conscience. And so for the first half-hour, as the clerks were dropping in, there was talk round about the stoves.

Des Lupeaulx was shaving when Dutocq appeared; he did not put down his razor as he gave the clerk a glance with the air of a general that issues an order.

"Are we by ourselves?"

"Yes, sir."

"Very well. Go for Rabourdin; walk ahead, and—hold on. You must have kept a copy of that list."

"Yes."

"*Inde iræ*—you understand. We must have a general hue and cry. Try to invent something to raise a clamor."

"I can have a caricature drawn, but I have not five hundred francs to pay for it."

"Who will draw it?"

"Bixiou."

"He shall have a thousand francs and the assistant's place under Colleville. Colleville will come to an understanding with him."

"But he will not believe me."

"You want to mix me up in it, perhaps? It is that or nothing—do you understand?"

"If Monsieur Baudoyer is director, he might possibly lend the money——"

"Yes, he is going to be director. Leave me, and be quick about it. Don't seem as if you had been to see me. Go down by the back stairs."

Dutocq went back to the office, his heart throbbing with joy. He was wondering how to raise an outcry against his chief without committing himself, when Bixiou looked in just to wish his friends the Rabourdins good-day. Having given up his wager for lost, it pleased that practical joker to pose as though he had won.

BIXIOU (*mimicking Phellion's voice*). "Gentlemen, I present my compliments to you, and wish you collectively a good-day. I appoint the coming Sunday for the dinner at the Rocher de Cancale. But a serious dilemma presents itself: are the retiring clerks to come or not?"

POIRET. "Yes; even those that are pensioned off."

BIXIOU. "It is all one to me; I shall not have to pay for it" (*general amazement*). "Baudoyer has been appointed. I should love to hear him calling Laurent at this moment." (*Mimics Baudoyer*.) "'Laurent, look up my hair-shirt, and my scourge along with it!'" (*Peals of laughter from the clerks*.) "*Ris d'aboyeur d'oie!* There is sense in Colleville's anagrams, for Xavier Rabourdin's name makes *D'abord rêva bureaux e u fin riche*, you know. If my name happened to be 'Charles X., by the grace of God, King of France and Navarre,' I should quake for fear lest my anagram might come true likewise."

THUILLIER. "Oh, come now, you want to make fun of it!"

BIXIOU (*laughing in his face*). "*Ris-au-laid! (riz-au-lait).** That is neat, Daddy Thuillier, for you are not good-looking.

* A hideous smile like rice and milk. Untranslatable pun.

Rabourdin is sending in his resignation in a fury because Baudoyer is director."

VIMEUX (*coming in*). "What stuff! I have just been repaying Antoine thirty or forty francs, and he tells me that Monsieur and Madame Rabourdin were at the minister's private party last night, and stopped till a quarter to twelve. His excellency came as far as the stairs with Madame Rabourdin. She was divinely dressed, it seems. He is director in fact, and no mistake. Riffé, the confidential copying-clerk, stopped late to finish the report sooner. There is no mystery about it now. Monsieur Clergeot is retiring. After thirty years of service, it is no disgrace. Monsieur Cochin, who is well-to-do——"

BIXIOU. "He makes cochineal (*cochenille*), according to Colleville."

VIMEUX. "Why, he is in the cochineal trade; he is a partner in Matifat's business in the Rue des Lombards. Well, he is to go, and Poiret is to go. Nobody else is coming on instead. That much is positive, no more is known. Monsieur Rabourdin's appointment came this morning. They are afraid of intrigues."

BIXIOU. "What sort of intrigues?"

FLEURY. "Baudoyer, begad! The clericals are backing him up. There is something new here in the Liberal paper; it is only a couple of lines, but it is funny"—(*reads*)—"In the green-room of the Italiens yesterday there was some talk of M. de Chateaubriand's return to office. This belief was founded upon the appointment of M. Rabourdin to fill the post originally intended for M. Baudoyer—M. Rabourdin being a protege of the vicomte's friends. The clerical party would never have withdrawn except to make a compromise with the great man of letters.' Scum of the earth!"

DUTOCQ (*comes in after listening outside*). "Scum! Who? Rabourdin. Then you have heard the news?"

FLEURY (*rolling his eyes fiercely*). "Rabourdin!—scum!"

Have you taken leave of your wits, Dutocq? And do you want a bullet for ballast in your brains?"

DUTOCQ. "I did not say a word against Monsieur Rabourdin; only just now, out in the courtyard, it was told me as a secret that he had been informing against a good many of the staff, and had given notes; in short, I was told that he had sent in a report of the departments, and we are all done for; that is why he is in favor——"

PHELLION (*shouts*). "Monsieur Rabourdin is incapable——"

BIXIOU. "Here is a nice state of things! I say, Dutocq?" (*They exchange a word or two, and go out into the corridor.*)

BIXIOU. "What ever can have happened?"

DUTOCQ. "Do you remember the caricature?"

BIXIOU. "Yes; what about it?"

DUTOCQ. "Draw it, and you will be chief clerk's assistant, and you will get something handsome beside. You see, my dear fellow, dissension has been sown in the upper regions. The minister is pledged to Rabourdin; but if he does not appoint Baudoyer, he will get into trouble with the clergy. Don't you know? The King, the Dauphin, the Dauphiness, the grand almoner, the whole Court, in fact, are for Baudoyer; the minister wants Rabourdin."

BIXIOU. "Good!——"

DUTOCQ. "The minister has begun to see that he must give way, but he must get quit of the difficulty before he can go over. He wants a reason for ridding himself of Rabourdin. So somebody has unearthed an old report that he made with a view of reforming the service, and some of it is getting about. That is how I try to explain the thing to myself, at least. Do the drawing; you come on in a match played among great folk; you will do a service to the minister, the Court, and all others concerned, and get your step. Do you properly understand?"

BIXIOU. "I do not understand how you can know all this, or whether you are just making it up."

DUTOCQ. "Would you like me to show you your paragraph?"

BIXIOU. "Yes."

DUTOCQ. "Very well, come round to my place, for I want to put the report in sure hands."

BIXIOU. "Go by yourself" (*goes back to the Rabourdins*). "People are talking of nothing but this news that Dutocq has brought; upon my honor. Monsieur Rabourdin's notes on the men that he meant to reform out of the service can't have been very complimentary. That is the secret of his promotion. Nothing astonishes us in these days" (*strikes an attitude, after "Talma"*).

"'Illustrious heads have fallen before your eyes,
And yet, oh, senseless men! ye show surprise'—

—if somebody points out a reason of this sort when a man gets into favor! Our Baudoyer is too stupid to make his way by such methods. Accept my congratulations, gentlemen, you are under an illustrious chief" (*goes*).

POIRET. "I shall retire from the service without understanding a single thing that that gentleman has said since he came here. What does he mean with his falling heads?"

FLEURY. "The four sergeants of La Rochelle, egad! Berton, Ney, Caron, the brothers Faucher, and all the massacres."

PIELLION. "He says risky things in a flippant manner."

FLEURY. "Why don't you say at once that he lies; that he humbugs you; that the truth turns to *verdegis* in his throat?"

PIELLION. "Your remarks transgress the limits of politeness and the consideration due to a colleague."

VIMEUX. "It seems to me that if what he says is false,

such remarks are called slander and defamation of character, and the man who utters them deserves, and is like to get, a horsewhipping."

FLEURY (*waxing wrathful*). "And if a government office were a public place, it would be an indictable offense, and go straight to a court of law."

PHELLION (*anxious to avoid a quarrel, endeavors to change the subject*). "Calm yourselves, gentlemen, I am at work upon a little treatise on morality, and have just come to the soul——"

FLEURY (*interrupting*). "What do you say to it, Monsieur Phellion?"

PHELLION (*reading aloud*). "'Question. What is the soul of man?"

"'Answer. A spiritual substance which thinks and reasons.'"

THUILLIER. "A spiritual substance! You might as well say an ethereal block of stone."

POIRET. "Just let him go on——"

PHELLION (*continues*). "'Q. Whence comes the soul?"

"'A. It comes from God, by whom it was created; God made it simple and indivisible, consequently its destructibility is inconceivable, and He has said——'"

POIRET (*bewildered*). "God?"

PHELLION. "Yes, m^{onsieur}, tradition says so."

FLEURY (*to Poiret*). "Don't you interrupt!"

PHELLION (*resumes*). "'—has said that He created it immortal, which means that it will never die."

"'Q. To what end does the soul exist?"

"'A. To comprehend, to will, and to remember; it comprises the understanding, the will, and the memory."

"'Q. To what end have we understanding?"

"'A. That we may know. The understanding is the eye of the soul.'"

FLEURY. "And the soul is the eye of what?"

PHELLION (*continuing*). “‘Q. What is the understanding bound to know?

“‘A. The truth.

“‘Q. Why has man a will?

“‘A. In order that he may love good and eschew evil.

“‘Q. What is good?

“‘A. The source of man's happiness.’”

VIMEUX. “And are you writing this for young ladies?”

PHELLION. “Yes” (*continues*). “‘Q. How many kinds of good are there?’”

FLEURY. “This is prodigiously improper!”

PHELLION (*indignantly*). “Oh! *mô sieur*” (*cooling down*). “Here is the answer, anyhow. I have come to it”—(*reads*)—“‘A. There are two kinds of good—temporal good and eternal good.’”

POIRET (*with a contemptuous countenance*). “And will there be a great sale for *that*?”

PHELLION. “I venture to hope so. It takes a lot of mental exercise to keep up a system of questions and answers; that was why I asked you to allow me to think, for the answers——”

THUILLIER. “The answers might be sold separately though.”

POIRET. “Is it a pun?”

THUILLIER. “Yes. They will sell the gammon without spinach.”

PHELLION. “It was very wrong, indeed, of me to interrupt you.” (*Dives in among his pasteboard cases. To himself.*) “But they have forgotten Monsieur Rabourdin.”

Meanwhile a scene that took place between the minister and des Lupeaulx decided Rabourdin's fate. The secretary-general went to find his chief in his study before breakfast.

“Your excellency is not playing aboveboard with me,” he

began, when he had made sure that La Brière could hear nothing.

"Here, he is going to quarrel with me," thought the minister, "because his mistress flirted with me yesterday." Aloud he said, "I did not think that you were such a boy, my dear friend."

"Friend," repeated the secretary-general; "I shall soon know about that."

The minister looked haughtily at des Lupeaulx.

"We are by ourselves, so we can have an explanation. The deputy for the district in which my estate of des Lupeaulx is situated——"

"Then it really is an estate?" laughed the minister, to hide his surprise.

"Enlarged by purchases to the extent of two hundred thousand francs," des Lupeaulx added carelessly. "You knew ten days ago that the deputy was going to resign his seat, and you said nothing to me—you were not bound to do so; still, you knew very well that it is my wish to sit on the Centre benches. Did you not think that I might throw in my lot with the doctrinaires, the party that will eat you up, Monarchy and all, if they are allowed to recruit all the able men that you slight? Do you not know that there are not more than fifty or sixty dangerous heads at a time in a nation, and that in those fifty or sixty the intellect is on a level with the ambition? The whole art of government consists in finding out those heads, so that you may buy them or cut them off. I do not know whether I have talent, but I have ambition; and you make a blunder when you do not come to an understanding with a man who means nothing but good to you. The coronation dazzled you for a minute, but what follows? The war of words and arguments will begin again and grow more acrimonious. Well, so far as you are concerned, you don't find me in the Left Centre, believe me! Your prefect has had confidential instructions, no doubt; but, in spite of his

manœuvres, I am sure of a majority. It is time that we came to a thorough understanding. Sometimes people are better friends after a little *coup de Jarnac*.* I shall be a count, and the grand cross of the Legion will not be refused after my services; but I insist not so much on these two points as upon a third which your influence can decide. You have not yet appointed Rabourdin; I have had news this morning; you will give general satisfaction by nominating Baudoyer——”

“*Baudoyer!*” exclaimed the minister; “you know him!”

“Yes,” said des Lupeaulx; “but when he gives proof of his incompetence, you can get rid of him by asking his patrons to take him into their employ. Then you will have an important post in your gift, and that may facilitate a compromise with some ambitious man.”

“I have given my word to Rabourdin!”

“Yes, but I do not ask you to change your mind at once. I know that it is dangerous to say ‘Yes’ and ‘No’ on the same day. Wait, and you can sign the day after to-morrow. Well, in two days’ time you will see that it is impossible to keep Rabourdin; and beside, he will have sent in his resignation, plump and plain.”

“Resignation?”

“Yes.”

“Why?”

“He has been at work for some power unknown, playing the spy on a large scale all through the departments. This was found out by accident; it has got about, and the clerks are furious. For mercy’s sake, do not work with him to-day; let me find an excuse. Go to the King, I am sure you will find that certain persons will be pleased by your concession as to Baudoyer, and you will get something in exchange. Then you will strengthen your position later on by getting rid of the fool, seeing that he has been forced upon you, as one may say.”

* Hamstringing by a stroke of the sword; used by Jarnac, 1547.

"What made you change your mind about Rabourdin in this way?"

"Would you assist Monsieur de Chateaubriand to write an article against the Government? Well, this is how Rabourdin treats me in his report," said des Lupeaulx, handing his note to the minister. "He is reorganizing the whole system, no doubt, for the benefit of a confederation which we do not know. I shall keep on friendly terms with him, so as to watch over him. I think I will do some great service to the Government, so as to reach the peerage; a peerage is the one thing that I care about. I do not want office, nor anything else that can cross your path. I am aiming at the peerage; then I shall be in a position to marry some banker's daughter with two hundred thousand livres a year. So let me do you some great service, so that the King can say that I have saved the throne. This long time past I have said: 'Liberalism no longer meets us in the field; Liberalism has given up conspiracy, the Carbonari, and violent methods;' it is undermining us and preparing to say once for all: 'Get thee hence that I may take thy place!' Do you think that I pay court to a Rabourdin's wife for my pleasure? No; I had information! So for to-day there are two things—the adjournment of the nominations and your *sincere* support at my election. At the end of the session you shall see whether I have not paid my debt with interest."

For all answer the minister handed over the report.

"And I will tell Rabourdin that you postpone him till Saturday?"

The minister nodded. In a few minutes the messenger had crossed the building and informed Rabourdin that he must go to the minister on Saturday; for that then the Chamber would be engaged with petitions, and the minister would have the whole day at liberty.

Meanwhile Saillard went on his errand to the minister's wife and slipped in his speech, to which the lady replied, with

dignity, that she never meddled in State affairs, and beside, she had heard that Rabourdin was appointed. Saillard in alarm went up to Baudoyer's office, and there found Dutocq, Godard, and Bixiou in a state of exasperation which words fail to describe; for they were reading the rough draft of Rabourdin's terrible report.

BIXIOU (*pointing to a passage*). "Here you are, Saillard: 'SAILLARD.—Cashiers to be suppressed throughout. The departments should keep accounts current with the Treasury. Saillard is well-to-do, and does not need a pension.' Would you like to see your son-in-law?" (*turns over the leaf*.) "Here he is: 'BAUDOYER.—Utterly incompetent. Dismiss without pension; he is well-to-do.' And our friend Godard" (*turns over another leaf*). "'GODARD.—Dismiss. Pension one-third of present salary.' In short, we are all here. Here am I—'An artist to be employed at the opera, the Menus-Plaisirs, or the Muséum, with a salary from the Civil List. Plenty of ability, not very steady, incapable of application, a restless disposition.' Oh! I will most truly give you enough of the artist."

SAILLARD. "Cashiers to be suppressed? Why, the man is a monster!"

BIXIOU. "What has he to say about our mysterious Desroys?" (*Turns the leaf and reads*.) "'DESROYS.—A dangerous man, in that he holds subversive principles that cannot be shaken. As a son of a member of the Convention he admires that institution; he may become a pernicious publicist.'"

BAUDOYER. "A detective is not so clever."

GODARD. "I shall go at once to the secretary-general and lodge a complaint in form. If that man is nominated, we ought all to resign in a body."

DUTOCQ. "Listen, gentlemen, let us be prudent. If you revolt at once, we should be accused of personal motives and a desire for revenge. No, let the rumor spread; and when

the whole service rises in protest, your proceedings will meet with general support."

BIXIOU. "Dutocq works on the principles of the sublime Rossini's great *aria* in 'Basilio,' which proves that the mighty composer is a politic man. This seems to me to be fair and reasonable. I think of leaving my card on Monsieur Rabourdin to-morrow morning; I shall have the name engraved upon it, and the titles underneath: 'Bixiou: Not very steady, incapable of application, restless disposition.'"

GODARD. "A good idea, gentlemen. Let us all have our cards printed, and Rabourdin shall have them to-morrow morning."

BAUDOYER. "Monsieur Bixiou, will you undertake these little details, and see that the plates are destroyed after a single card has been printed from each?"

DUTOCQ (*taking Bixiou aside*). "Well, will you draw that caricature now?"

BIXIOU. "I see, my dear fellow, that you have been in the secret for ten days." (*Looks him full in the face.*) "Am I going to be chief clerk's assistant?"

DUTOCQ. "Yes, upon my word of honor, and a thousand francs beside, as I told you. You do not know what a service you are doing to powerful personages."

BIXIOU. "Do you know them?"

DUTOCQ. "Yes."

BIXIOU. "Very well, then, I want to speak with them."

DUTOCQ (*drily*). "Do the caricature or let it alone; you will be chief clerk's assistant or you will not."

BIXIOU. "Well, then, let us see those thousand francs."

DUTOCQ. "You shall have them against the drawing."

BIXIOU. "Go ahead! The caricature shall go the round of the offices to-morrow. So let us make fools of the Rabourdins!" (*To Saillard, Godard, and Baudoyer, who are conferring in whispers.*) "We are going to set our neighbors in a ferment." (*Goes out with Dutocq, and crosses over to*

Rabourdin's office. At sight of him, Fleury and Thuillier show signs of excitement.) "Well, gentlemen, what is the matter? All that I told you just now is so true that you may have ocular demonstration at this moment of the most shameful delation. Go to the office of the virtuous, honest, estimable, upright, and pious Baudoyer; he is 'incompetent,' at any rate, in such a business as this! Your chief has invented a sort of guillotine for clerks, that is certain. Go and look at it, follow the crowd, there is nothing to pay if you are not satisfied, you shall have the full benefit of your misfortune *gratis*. What is more, the appointments have been postponed. The offices are in an uproar; and Rabourdin has just heard that he is not to work with the minister to-day. Just go!"

Phellion and Poiret stayed behind. Phellion was too much attached to Rabourdin to go in search of proof that might injure a man whom he had no wish to judge, and Poiret was to retire in five days' time. Just at that moment Sébastien came downstairs to collect some papers to be included with the documents for signature. He was sufficiently astonished to find the office empty, but he showed no sign of surprise.

PHELLION (*rising to his feet, a rare event*). "My young friend, do you know what is going on? what rumors are current with respect to M^{onsieur} Rabourdin, to whom you are attached; for whom" (*lowering his voice for Sébastien's ear*), "for whom my affection is as great as my esteem? It is said that he has been so imprudent as to leave a report of the clerks lying about somewhere——" (*stops suddenly short, for Sébastien turns as pale as a white rose, and sinks into a chair. Phellion is obliged to hold him in his muscular arms.*) "Put a key down his back; M^{onsieur} Poiret! have you a key?"

POIRET. "I always carry my door-key." (*Old Poiret, junior, pushes his key down Sébastien's collar; Phellion brings a glass of cold water. The poor boy opens his eyes, only to shed a torrent of tears; he lays his head on Phellion's desk, flings himself down in a heap as if stricken by lightning, and sobs in*

such a heart-rending fashion, with such a genuine outpouring of grief, that Poiret, for the first time in his life, is touched by the sorrow of a fellow-creature.)

PhELLION (*raising his voice*). "Come, come, my young friend, bear up! One must have courage in a great crisis! You are a man. What is the matter! What is there to upset you so in this affair? it is out of all reason."

SÉBASTIEN (*through his sobs*). "*I have ruined M. Rabourdin! I left the paper about; I had been copying it; I have ruined my benefactor. This will kill me! Such a great man! A man that might have been a minister!*"

POIRET (*blowing his nose*). "Then he really made the report?"

SÉBASTIEN (*through his sobs*). "But it was for—— There! I am telling his secrets now! Oh! that miserable Dutocq, *he* took it."

At that the tears and sobs began afresh, and grew so violent that Rabourdin came out of his office, recognized the voice, and went upstairs. He found Sébastien, half-swooning, like a figure of Christ, in the arms of Phellion and Poiret; and the two clerks, with countenances distorted by compassion, grotesquely playing the parts of the Maries in the composition.

RABOURDIN. "What is the matter, gentlemen?"

SÉBASTIEN (*starting up, falls on his knees before Rabourdin*). "Oh, sir, I have ruined you! That list! Dutocq is showing it about. He found it out, no doubt!"

RABOURDIN (*composedly*). "I knew it." (*Raises Sébastien and draws him away.*) "My friend, you are a child!" (*To Phellion.*) "Where are they all?"

PhELLION. "They have gone to Monsieur Baudoyer's study, sir, to look at a list which is said——"

RABOURDIN. "That will do" (*goes out with Sébastien. Poiret and Phellion, overcome with astonishment, look at one another, completely at a loss.*)

POIRET (*to Phellion*). "Monsieur Rabourdin!"

PHELLION (*to Poiret*). "Monsieur Rabourdin!"

POIRET. "Well, if ever! Monsieur Rabourdin!"

PHELLION. "Did you see how he looked—quite calm and dignified in spite of everything?—"

POIRET (*with a grimace intended for a knowing air*). "I should not be at all surprised if there were something at the bottom of all this."

PHELLION. "A man of honor, blameless and stainless——"

POIRET. "And how about Dutocq?"

PHELLION. "Monsieur Poiret, you think as I think about Dutocq; do you not understand me?"

POIRET (*with two or three little knowing nods*). "Yes."
The others come back.

FLEURY. "This is coming it strong! I have seen it with my own eyes, and yet I can't believe it! M. Rabourdin, the best of men! Upon my word, if such as he can play the sneak, it is enough to sicken you with virtue. I used to put Rabourdin among Plutarch's heroes."

VIMEUX. "Oh! it is true."

POIRET (*bethinking himself that he has but five days to stay*).
"But, gentlemen, what do you say about the man that lay in wait for Monsieur Rabourdin and stole the papers?"

Dutocq slips out of the room.

FLEURY. "A Judas Iscariot! Who is he?"

PHELLION (*adroitly*). "He is not among us, that is certain."

VIMEUX (*an idea beginning to dawn upon him*). "It is Dutocq!"

PHELLION. "I have seen no proof whatever, monsieur. While you were out of the room, that young fellow, Monsieur de la Roche, came in and was nearly heart-broken over it. Look, you see his tears on my desk."

POIRET. "He swooned in our arms—— Oh! my doorway; dear, dear! it is still down his back!" (*goes out.*)

VIMEUX. "The minister would not work to-day with Monsieur Rabourdin; the head of the staff came to say a word or two to Monsieur Saillard; Monsieur Baudoyer was advised to make application for the cross of the Legion of Honor, one will be granted to the division at New Year, and it is to go to Monsieur Baudoyer. Is that clear? Monsieur Rabourdin is sacrificed by the very people for whom he worked. That is what Bixiou says. We were all dismissed except Phellion and Sébastien."

DU BRUEL (*comes in*). "Well, gentlemen, is it true?"

THUILLIER. "Strictly true."

DU BRUEL. "Good-day, gentlemen" (*puts on his hat and goes out*).

THUILLIER. "That vaudevilliste does not waste time on file-firing; he is off to the Duc de Rhétoré and the Duc de Maufrigneuse, but he may run! Colleville is to be our chief, they say."

PHELLION. "Yet he seemed to be attached to Monsieur Rabourdin."

POIRET (*returns*). "I had all the trouble in the world to get back my door-key. The youngster is crying, and Monsieur Rabourdin has completely disappeared." (*Dutocq and Bixiou come in together.*)

BIXIOU. "Well, gentlemen, queer things are happening in your office! Du Bruel!—" (*looks into du Bruel's cabinet.*) "Gone?"

THUILLIER. "Out."

BIXIOU. "And Rabourdin?"

FLEURY. "Melted away, evaporated, vanished in smoke! To think that such a man, the best of men!—"

POIRET (*to Dutocq*). "That youngster Sébastien, in his grief, accused you of taking the work, Monsieur Dutocq, ten days ago—"

BIXIOU (*looking at Dutocq*). "My dear fellow, you must clear yourself" (*all the clerks stare at Dutocq*).

DUTOQ. "Where is the little viper that was copying it?"

BIXIOU. "How do you know that he was copying it? Nothing but a diamond can cut a diamond, my dear fellow!"
(*Dutoq goes out.*)

POIRET. "Look here, Monsieur Bixiou; I have only five days and a half to stay in the office, and I should like for once—just for once—to have the pleasure of understanding you. Do me the honor to explain where the diamond comes in under the circumstances."

BIXIOU. "It means, old man (for I am quite willing to descend to your level for once), it means that as the diamond alone can polish the diamond, so none but a pry is a match for his like."

FLEURY. "'Pry' in this case being put for 'spy.'"

POIRET. "I do not understand——"

BIXIOU. "Oh, well, another time you will."

M. Rabourdin had hurried away to the minister. His excellency was at the Chamber. Thither, accordingly, Rabourdin went and wrote a few lines, but the minister was on his legs in the midst of a hot discussion. Rabourdin waited, not in the Salle des Conférences, but outside in the courtyard; he decided in spite of the cold to take up his post by his excellency's carriage, and to speak with him as he came out. The sergeant-at-arms told him that a storm had been brewed by the nineteen members of the Extreme Left, and there had been a scene in the House. Rabourdin meanwhile, in feverish excitement, paced up and down in the courtyard. He waited for five mortal hours. At half-past six the House rose, and the minister's chasseur came out with a message for the coachman.

"Hey, Jean! His excellency has gone to the Palace with the minister of war; they will dine together afterward. We are to fetch them at ten o'clock. There is to be a meeting of the council."

Slowly Rabourdin walked home again in a state of exhaus-

tion easy to imagine. It was seven o'clock. He had barely time to dress.

"Well!" his wife cried joyously, as he came into the drawing-room. "You have the appointment now."

Rabourdin raised his head in melancholy anguish. "I am very much afraid that I shall never set foot in the office again."

"What!" cried his wife, trembling with cruel anxiety.

"That memorandum of mine on the staff has been the round of the department; I tried to speak with the minister, and could not."

A vision flashed before Célestine's eyes; some demon flung a sudden lurid light upon her last conversation with des Lupeaulx.

"If I had behaved like a vulgar woman," she thought, "we should have had the place."

She gazed at Rabourdin with something like anguish. There was a dreary silence, and at dinner both were absorbed in musings.

"And it is our Wednesday!" she exclaimed.

"All is not lost, dear Célestine," he answered, putting a kiss upon her forehead; "I may perhaps see the minister to-morrow morning, and all will be cleared up. Sébastien sat up late last night, all the fair copies are made and in order. I will put the whole thing on the minister's desk, and beg him to go through it with me. La Brière will help me. A man is never condemned without a hearing."

"I am curious to see whether Monsieur des Lupeaulx will come to us to-day."

"He! Of course he will come, he will not fail. There is something of the tiger in him—he loves to lick the blood after he has given the wound."

"My poor love, I do not know how a man that could think of so grand a reform should not see, at the same time, that no one must hear of it. Some ideas a man must keep within himself, because he, and he alone, can carry them out. You,

in your sphere, should have done as Napoleon did in his; he bent and twisted and crawled—yes, crawled!—for Bonaparte married Barras' mistress to gain a command. You should have waited; you should have been elected as a deputy; you should have watched the political changes, now in the trough of the sea, now on the crest of a wave; you should have adopted Monsieur de Villèle's Italian motto *Col tempo*, otherwise rendered, 'All things come round to him that will but wait.' For seven years it has been Monsieur de Villèle's aim to be in office; he took the first step in 1814, when he was just your present age, with a protest against the Charter. That is your mistake; you have been ready to act under orders; you were made to issue them."

The arrival of Schinner the painter put an end to this talk, but Rabourdin grew thoughtful over his wife's words.

Schinner grasped his hand. "An artist's devotion is of very little use, my dear fellow; but at such times as these we are stanch, we artists. I got an evening paper. Baudoyer is to be director, I see, and he is to have the cross of the Legion of Honor."

"I am first in order of seniority, and I have been twenty-four years in the service," smiled Rabourdin.

"I know Monsieur le Comte de Sérizy, the minister of State, pretty well; if you like to make use of him, I can see him," said Schinner.

The rooms were filled with persons who knew nothing of the movements of the administration. Du Bruel did not appear. Mme. Rabourdin was more charming and in higher spirits than usual; the horse, wounded on the battlefield, will summon up all its strength to carry its master.

The women behaved charmingly to her, now that she was defeated.

"She is very brave," said some.

"And yet she was very attentive to des Lupeaulx," the Baronne du Châtelet remarked to the Vicomtesse de Fontaine.

"Then do you think——?"

"If so, Monsieur Rabourdin would at least have had the cross," said Mme. de Camps, defending her friend.

Toward ten o'clock des Lupeaulx appeared. To give an idea of his appearance, it can only be said that his spectacles looked melancholy, while there was laughter in his eyes; the glass veiled their expression so completely that no one but a physiognomist could have seen the diabolical gleam in them. He grasped Rabourdin's hand, and Rabourdin could only submit to the pressure.

"We must have some talk together by-and-by," he said, as he seated himself beside the fair Rabourdin, who behaved to admiration. "Ah! you are great," he said, with a side-glance at her; "I find you as I imagined you—sublime in defeat. Do you know how very seldom people respond to our expectations of them! And so you are not overwhelmed by defeat. You are right, we shall triumph," he continued, lowering his voice. "Your fate will always be in your own hands so long as you have an ally in a man who worships you. We will hold a council."

"But Baudoyer is appointed, is he not?"

"Yes."

"And the cross?"

"Not yet, but he is going to have it."

"Well?"

"You do not understand policy."

To Mme. Rabourdin it seemed as if that evening would never come to an end. Meanwhile, in the Place Royale a comedy was being played, a comedy that is always repeated in seven different salons after every change of government. The Saillards' sitting-room was full. M. and Mme. Transon came at eight o'clock. Mme. Transon kissed Mme. Baudoyer *née* Saillard. M. Bataille, the captain of the National Guard, came with his wife and the curé of Saint-Paul's.

"Monsieur Baudoyer, I want to be the first to congratulate

you," said Mme. Transon; "your talents have met with their deserts. Well, you have fairly earned your advancement."

"So now you are a director," added M. Transon, rubbing his hands; "it is a great honor for the Quarter."

"And without scheming for it, one may say indeed," cried old Saillard. "*We* are not intriguers; *we* do not go to the minister's parties."

Uncle Mitral rubbed his nose, and smiled and looked at his niece. Elizabeth was talking with Gigonnet. Falleix did not know what to think of the blindness of Saillard and Baudoyer. Dutocq, Bixiou, du Bruel, and Godard came in, followed by Colleville, now chief clerk.

"What chumps!" said Bixiou, in an undertone for du Bruel's benefit. "What a fine caricature one might make of them—a lot of flat-fish, stock-fish, and winkles all dancing a saraband."

"Monsieur le Directeur," began Colleville, "I have come to congratulate you, or rather we all congratulate ourselves upon your appointment, and we have come to assure you of our zealous coöperation."

M. and Mme. Baudoyer, Isidore's father and mother, were there to enjoy the triumph of their son and his wife. Uncle Bidault had dined at home; his little twinkling eyes dismayed Bixiou.

"There is a character that would do for a vaudeville," he said, pointing him out to du Bruel. "What does that fellow sell? Such an odd fish ought to be hung out for a sign at the door of an old curiosity shop. What a greatcoat! I thought that no one but Poiret could keep such a thing on exhibition after ten years of exposure to the inclemencies of the seasons."

"Baudoyer is magnificent," said du Bruel.

"Stunning!" returned Bixiou.

"Gentlemen," said Baudoyer, "this is my own uncle, Monsieur Mitral; and this is my wife's great-uncle, Monsieur Bidault!"

Gigonnet and Mitral looked keenly at the clerks; the metallic gleam of gold seemed to glitter in the old men's eyes; it impressed the two scoffers.

"Did you take a good look at that pair of uncles, eh?" asked Bixiou, as they walked under the arcades of the Palais Royal. "Two specimens of the genus Shylock. They go the market, I will be bound, and lend money at a hundred per cent. per week. They lend on pledges, traffic in clothes, gold lace, cheese, women and children; they be Arabs, they be Greeks, they be Genoese-Genevese-Lombard Jews; brought forth by a Tartar and suckled by a she-wolf."

"Uncle Mitral was a bailiff once, I am certain," said Godard.

"There you see!" said du Bruel.

"I must just go and see the sheets pulled off," continued Bixiou; "but I should dearly like to make a careful study of Monsieur Rabourdin's salon; you are very lucky, du Bruel, you can go there."

"I?" said du Bruel; "what should I do there? My face does not lend itself to the expression of condolence. And beside, it is very vulgar nowadays to dance attendance on persons out of office."

At midnight Mme. Rabourdin's drawing-room was empty; three persons only remained—des Lupeaulx and the master and mistress of the house. When Schinner went, and M. and Mme. Octave de Camps* had taken their leave, des Lupeaulx rose with a mysterious air, stood with his back to the clock, and looked at the husband and wife in turn.

"Nothing is lost, my friends," he said, "for we remain to you—the minister and I. Dutocq, put between two powers, chose the stronger, as it seemed to him. He served the grand almoner and the Court and played me false; it is all in the day's work, a man in politics never complains of treachery. Still, Baudoyer is sure to be cashiered in a few months' time

* *Vide* "Madame Firmiani."

and transferred to the prefecture of police, for the grand almonry will not desert him."

With that, des Lupeaulx broke out into a long tirade over the grand almonry, and expatiated on the risks run by a Government that looked to the church and the jesuits for support. Still, it is worth while to point out that, though the Liberal papers laid such stress upon the influence of Court patronage and the grand almonry, neither of these counted for much in Baudoyer's promotion. Petty intrigue died away in the higher spheres because greater questions were at stake. Perhaps M. Gaudron's importunities extorted a few words in Baudoyer's favor, but at the minister's first remark the matter was allowed to drop. Passion in itself did the work of a very efficient spy among the members of the congregation; they used to denounce each other. And surely it was permissible to oppose that society to the brazen-fronted fraternity of the doctrine summed up by the formula: "Heaven helps him who helps himself." As for the occult power exercised by the congregation, it was for the most part wielded by subordinates who used the name of that body to conjure with for their private ends. Liberal rancor, in fact, delighted to represent the grand almonry as a giant; in politics, in the administration, in the army or the civil service. Fear always makes idols for itself. At this moment Baudoyer believed in the grand almonry, and all the while the only almonry that befriended him held its session at the Café Thémis. There are times in the history of the world when everything that happens amiss is set down to the account of some one institution, or man in power; nobody will give them credit for their abilities, they serve as synonyms and equivalent terms for crass stupidity. As M. de Talleyrand was supposed to hail every political event with an epigram, so in the same manner the grand almonry did and undid everything at this period. Unluckily, it did and undid nothing whatever. Its influence was not in the hands of a Cardinal Richelieu or a Cardinal

Mazarin; it fell, on the contrary, to a sort of Cardinal Fleury, the kind of man that is timid for five years and rash for a day. At Saint-Merri, at a later day, the doctrine above mentioned did with impunity what Charles X. only attempted to do in July, 1830. If the proviso as to the censorship had not been so stupidly inserted in the new Charter, journalism also would have seen its Saint-Merri. The Orleans Branch would have carried out the scheme of Charles X., with the law at its back.

"Stop on under Baudoyer, summon up courage for that," continued des Lupeaulx, "be a true politician, put generous thoughts and impulses aside, confine yourself to your duty, say not a word to your director, never give him advice, and act only upon his orders. In three months' time Baudoyer will leave the department; they will either dismiss him or transfer him to some other sphere of activity. Perhaps he may go to the Household. Twice in my life I have been buried under an avalanche of folly in this way; I let it go by."

"Yes," said Rabourdin, "but you were not slandered, your honor was not involved, you were not compromised——"

Des Lupeaulx interrupted him with a peal of Homeric laughter. "Why, that is the daily bread of every man of mark in the whole fair realm of France! There are two ways of taking it; you can go under, which means you pack yourself off and plant cabbages somewhere or other; or you rise above it, and walk fearlessly on without so much as turning your head."

"In my own case," said Rabourdin, "there is but one way of untying the slip-knot which espionage and treachery have tightened about my neck; it is this—I must have an explanation with the minister at once; and if you are as sincerely attached to me as you say, it is in your power to bring me face to face with him to-morrow."

"Do you wish to lay your plan of administrative reform before him?"

Rabourdin bowed.

"Very well then, intrust your projects and memoranda to me, and he shall spend the night over them, I will engage."

"Then let us go together," Rabourdin answered quickly; "for after six years of work, at least I may expect the gratification of explaining it for an hour or two to a member of his majesty's Government, for the minister cannot choose but commend my perseverance."

Des Lupeaulx hesitated for a moment; Rabourdin's tenacity of purpose had put him on a road in which there was no cover for duplicity, so he looked at Mme. Rabourdin. "Which shall turn the scale?" he asked himself; "my hatred of him, my liking for her?"

"If you cannot trust me," he returned after a pause, "I can see that, as far as I am concerned, you will always be the writer of that 'secret note.' Farewell, madame."

Mme. Rabourdin bowed coldly. Célestine and Xavier went to their own rooms without a word, so heavily their misfortune lay upon them. The wife thought of her own unpleasant position. The chief clerk was making up his mind never to set foot in the office again; he was lost in far-reaching thoughts. This step was to change the course of his life; he must strike out a new path. He sat all night before his fire; Célestine, in her night-dress, stole in on tip-toe now and again, but he did not see her.

"Since I must go back for the last time to take away my papers and to put Bandoyer in possession, let us try the effect of my resignation."

He drafted his resignation, meditated over his expressions, and wrote the following letter:

"MONSEIGNEUR:—I have the honor to inclose my resignation in the same cover; but I venture to believe that your excellency will recollect that I said that I had placed my honor in your hands, and that an immediate explanation was

necessary. The explanation which I implored in vain would probably now be useless, for a fragment of my work has been surreptitiously taken and distorted and misinterpreted by malevolence, and I am compelled to withdraw before the tacit censure of those in authority. Your excellency may have thought, when I tried to obtain an interview that morning, that I wished to speak of my own advancement, whereas I was thinking only of the honor of your excellency's department and the public good; it is of some consequence to me that your excellency should lie under no misapprehension on this head," and the letter ended with the usual formulas.

By half-past seven o'clock the sacrifice had been made, the whole manuscript had been burnt. Tired out with thought and overcome by moral suffering, Rabourdin fell into a doze, with his head resting on the back of the armchair. A strange sensation awakened him; he felt hot tears falling on his hands, and saw his wife kneeling beside him. Célestine had come in and read the letter. She understood the full extent of their ruin. They were reduced to live upon four thousand livres; and, reckoning up her debts, she found that they amounted to thirty-two thousand francs. It was the most sordid poverty of all. And the noble man that had put such trust in her had no suspicion of the way in which she had abused his confidence. Célestine, fair as the Magdalen, was sobbing at his feet.

"The misfortune is complete," Xavier exclaimed in his dismay; "dishonored in the department, dishonored——"

A gleam of stainless honor flashed from Célestine's eyes; she sprang up like a frightened horse, her eyes flashed lightnings.

"I, I?" she cried in sublime tones. "Am I, too, an ordinary wife? If I had faltered, would you not have had your appointment? But it is easier to believe *that* than to believe the truth."

"What is it?" asked Rabourdin.

"You shall have it all in a few words," said she; "we owe thirty thousand francs."

Rabourdin caught her to him in a frenzy of joy, and made her sit on his knee.

"Never mind, darling," he said, and a great kindness that slid into the tones of his voice changed the bitterness of her tears into something vaguely and strangely sweet. "I, too, have made mistakes. I worked for my country to very little purpose; when I thought, at any rate, I might have done something worth the doing. Now I will start out on a new path. If I had sold spices all this while, we should be millionaires by now. Very well, let us sell spices. You are only twenty-eight years old, my darling. In ten years' time, hard work will give you back the luxury that you love, though we must give it up now for a little while. I, too, darling, am not an ordinary husband. We will sell the farm; the value of the land has been going up for seven years; the surplus and the furniture will pay my debts."

In Célestine's kiss there was love given back a thousandfold for that generous word.

"And then we shall have a hundred thousand francs to put into some business or other. In a month's time I shall find an investment. If Saillard happened upon a Martin Falleix, chance cannot fail us. Wait breakfast for me. I will come back from the minister with my neck free of that miserable yoke."

Célestine held her husband in a tight clasp, with super-human force; for the might of love gives a woman more than a man's strength, more power than the utmost transports of rage give to the strong.

She was hysterically laughing and crying, talking and sobbing all at once.

When Rabourdin went out at eight o'clock, the porter handed him the burlesque visiting cards sent in by Baudoyer,

Bixiou, Godard, and the rest. Nevertheless, he went to the office, and found Sébastien waiting for him at the door ; the lad begged him not to attempt to enter the place, a scurrilous caricature was being handed about.

“ If you wish to alleviate the bitterness of my fall, bring me that drawing ; for I am just taking my resignation myself to Ernest de la Brière, so that it may not be twisted out of all knowledge on its way to headquarters. I have my reasons for asking to see the caricature.”

Rabourdin waited till he was sure that his letter was in the minister’s hands ; then he went down to the courtyard. Sébastien gave him the lithographed drawing. There were tears in the boy’s eyes.

“ It is very clever,” said Rabourdin, and the face that he turned upon the supernumerary was as serene as the Saviour’s brow beneath the crown of thorns.

He walked in quietly as usual, and went straight to Baudoyer’s general office to give the necessary explanations before that slave of red-tape entered upon his new duties as director.

“ Tell Monsieur Baudoyer there is no time to lose,” he added before Godard and the clerks. “ My resignation is now in the minister’s hands, and I do not choose to stay in the office five minutes longer than I can help.”

Then, catching sight of Bixiou, Rabourdin walked up to him, held out the drawing, and said, to the astonishment of the clerks—

“ Was I not right when I said that you were an artist ? Only it is a pity that you used your pencil against a man whom it was impossible to judge in such a manner, or in the offices. But people ridicule everything in France—even God Himself.”

With that he drew Baudoyer into the late La Billardière’s rooms. At the door he met Phellion and Sébastien. They alone dared to show that they were faithful to the accused,

even in this great shipwreck. Rabourdin saw the tears in Phellion's eyes, and in spite of himself he wrung the clerk's hand.

"Môsieur," the good fellow said, "if we can be of any use whatever, command us——"

"Come in, my friends," Rabourdin said with a gracious dignity. "Sébastien, my boy, send in your resignation by Laurent; you are sure to be implicated in the slander that has driven me from my place, but I will take care of your future. We will go together."

Sébastien burst into tears.

M. Rabourdin closeted himself with M. Baudoyer in the late La Billardiére's room, and Phellion assisted him to explain the difficulties of the position to the new head of the division. With each new file of papers displayed by Rabourdin, with the opening of every pasteboard case, Baudoyer's little eyes grew large as saucers.

"Farewell, monsieur," concluded Rabourdin, with ironical gravity.

Sébastien meantime made up a packet of papers belonging to the chief clerk and took them away in a cab. Rabourdin crossed the great courtyard to wait on the minister. All the clerks in the building were at the windows. Rabourdin waited for a few minutes, but the minister made no sign. Then, accompanied by Phellion and Sébastien, he went out. Phellion bravely went as far as the Rue Duphot with the fallen official, by way of expressing his admiration and respect; then he returned to his desk, quite satisfied with himself. He had paid funeral honors to a great unappreciated talent for administration.

BIXIOU (*as Phellion comes in*). "*Victrix causa diis placuit, sed victa Catoni.*"

PhELLION. "Yes, monsieur."

POIRET. "What does that mean?"

FLEURY. "It means that the clericals rejoice, and that

Monsieur Rabourdin goes out with the esteem of all men of honor."

DUTOCQ (*nettled*). "You talked very differently yesterday."

FLEURY. "Say another word to me, and you shall feel my fist in your face. You sneaked Monsieur Rabourdin's work, that is certain!" (*Dutocq goes out.*) "Now go and complain to your Monsieur des Lupeaulx, you spy!"

BIXIOU (*grinning and grimacing like a monkey*). "I am curious to see how the division will get on. Monsieur Rabourdin was such a remarkable man that he must have had something in view when he made that list. The department is losing an uncommonly clever head" (*rubbing his hands*).

LAURENT. "Monsieur Fleury is wanted in the secretary's office."

OMNES. "Sacked!"

FLEURY (*from the door*). "It is all one to me; I have got a berth as a responsible editor. I can lounge about all day, or find something amusing to do in the newspaper office."

BIXIOU. "Dutocq has had poor old Desroys dismissed already; he was accused of wanting to cut off people's heads——"

THUILLIER. "*Les têtes des rois?*" (*Desroys.*)

BIXIOU. "Accept my congratulations. That is neat."

Enter COLLEVILLE (exultant). "Gentlemen, I am your chief clerk!"

THUILLIER (*embracing him*). "Oh, my friend, if I were chief myself, I should not be so pleased!"

BIXIOU. "His wife did that stroke of business, so it is not a master-stroke."

POIRET. "I should like to know the meaning of all this."

BIXIOU. "You want to know? There it is. The Chamber is, and always will be, the antechamber of the Administration, the Court is the boudoir, the ordinary way is the cellar, the bed is made now more than ever in the little by-ways thereof."

POIRET. "Monsieur Bixiou, explain yourself, I beg."

BIXIOU. "I will give you a paraphrase of my opinion. If you mean to be anything at last, you must be everything at first. Obviously, administrative reforms must be made; for, upon my word and honor, if the employés rob the Government of the time they ought to give to it, the Government robs them in return to make matters even. We do little because we get next to nothing; there are far too many of us for the work to be done, and *La Vertueuse Rabourdin* saw all that! That great man among the scribes foresaw the inevitable result, gentlemen, the 'working' (as simpletons are pleased to call it) of our admirable Liberal institutions. The Chamber will soon want to meddle with the Administration, and officials will want to be legislators. The Government will try to administer the laws, and the Administration will try to govern the country. Laws, accordingly, will be transformed into rules and regulations, and regulations will be treated as laws. God made this epoch for those that can enjoy a joke. I am looking on in admiration at the spectacle set forth for us by Louis XVIII., the greatest wag of modern times" (*general amazement*). "And if France, gentlemen, the best administered country in Europe, is in such a way, think what a state the others must be in. Poor countries! I wonder how they get on at all without the two Chambers, the Liberty of the Press, the Report, the Memorial, and the Circular, and a whole army of clerks! Think, now, how do they contrive to have an army or a navy? How can they exist when there is no one to weigh the pros and cons of every breath they draw and every mouthful that they eat? Can that sort of thing be called a government or a country? These funny fellows that travel about have stood me out that foreigners pretend to have a policy of their own, and that they enjoy a certain influence; but, there—I pity them! They know nothing of 'the spread of enlightenment;' they cannot 'set ideas in circulation;' they have no free and

independent tribunes; they are sunk in barbarism. There is no nation like the French for intelligence! Do you grasp that, Monsieur Poiret?" (*Poiret looks as if he had received a sudden shock.*) "Can you understand how a country can do without heads of divisions, directors-general, and dispense with a great staff of officials that is, and has been, the pride of France and of the Emperor Napoleon, who had his very sufficient reasons for creating places to fill? But, there—since these countries have the impudence to exist; since the War Office at Vienna employs scarcely a hundred clerks all told (whereas with us, little as they expected it before the Revolution, salaries and pensions now eat up one-third of the revenue), I will sum up by suggesting that as the Académie des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres has very little to do, it might as well offer a prize for the solution of the following problem: 'Which is the better constituted—the State that does a great deal with a few officials, or the State that does little and keeps plenty of officials to do it?'"

POIRET. "Is that your last word?"

BIXIOU. "*Ja, mein Herr! Oui, monsieur! Sì, signor! Da!* I spare you the other languages."

POIRET (*raising his hands to heaven*). "Good Lord! and they tell me that you are clever!"

BIXIOU. "Then did you not understand after all?"

PHELLION. "Anyhow, there is plenty of sense in that last remark——"

BIXIOU. "It is like the budget, as complicated as it seems to be simple; and thus I set it for you, like an illuminating lamp upon the edge of that break-neck precipice, that hole, that abyss, volcano, or what not, which the 'Constitutionnel' calls 'the political horizon.'"

POIRET. "I would rather have an explanation that I can understand."

BIXIOU. "Long live Rabourdin! that is my opinion. Are you satisfied?"

COLLEVILLE (*gravely*). "There is only one thing to be said against Monsieur Rabourdin."

POIRET. "What is it?"

COLLEVILLE. "He was not a chief clerk; he was a statesman."

PHELLION (*planting himself in front of Bixiou*). "Môsieur, if you appreciated Monsieur Rabourdin so well, what made you draw that disgus—that inf—that shocking caricature?"

BIXIOU. "How about that wager? Do you forget that I was playing the devil's game, and that your office owes me a dinner at the Rocher de Cancale?"

POIRET (*much ruffled*). "It seems to be written that I am to leave this place without comprehending a single idea in anything that Monsieur Bixiou says."

BIXIOU. "It is your own fault. Ask these gentlemen! Gentlemen, did you understand the gist of my observations? Were they just? Were they luminous?"

OMNES. "Yes, alas!"

MINARD. "Here is proof of it: I have just sent in my resignation. Good-day, gentlemen; I am going into business——"

BIXIOU. "Have you invented a mechanical corset or a feeding-bottle, a fire-pump or pattens, a stove that gives heat without fuel, or cooks a cutlet with three sheets of paper?"

MINARD (*going*). "I shall keep my secret to myself."

BIXIOU. "Ah, well, young Poiret, junior, these gentlemen all understand me, you see!"

POIRET (*mortified*). "Monsieur Bixiou, will you do me the honor to descend to my level just for once——"

BIXIOU (*winking at the others*). "By all means. Before you go, you may perhaps be glad to know what you are——"

POIRET (*quickly*). "An honest man, sir."

BIXIOU (*shrugging his shoulders*). "To define, explain, explore, and analyze the employé. Do you know how?"

POIRET. "I think so."

BIXIOU (*twisting one of Poiret's buttons*). "I most certainly doubt it."

POIRET. "An employé is a man paid to work for the Government."

BIXIOU. "Obviously. Then a soldier is an employé?"

POIRET (*perplexed*). "Why, no."

BIXIOU. "At any rate, he is paid by the Government to go on guard and to be passed in review. You will tell me that he is too anxious to leave his post, that he is not long enough at his post, that he works too hard, and touches metal too seldom (the barrel of his gun always excepted)."

POIRET (*opening wide eyes*). "Well, then, sir, an employé, more strictly speaking, is a man who must draw his salary if he is to live; he is not free to leave his post, and he can do nothing but copy and dispatch documents."

BIXIOU. "Ah, now we are arriving at a solution! So the government office is the employé's shell? You cannot have the one without the other. Now, what are we to say about the tide-waiter?" (*Poiret tries to stamp in vexation and escape; but Bixiou, having pulled off one button, holds him by another.*) "Bah! in the bureaucratic world he probably is a neuter. The customs-house official is a semi-employé; he is on the frontier just as he is on the borderland between the civil service and the army; he is not exactly a soldier, and not precisely an employé either. But look here, daddy, where are we going?" (*twists the button.*) "Where does the employé end? It is an important question. Is a prefect an employé?"

POIRET (*nervously*). "He is a functionary."

BIXIOU. "Oh! you are coming to a contradiction in terms! So a functionary is not an employé!"

POIRET (*looks round exhausted*). "Monsieur Godard looks as though he had something to say."

GODARD. "The employé represents the order, the functionary the genus."

BIXIOU. "Clever *sub-ordinate* ! I should not have thought you capable of so ingenious a distinction."

POIRET. "Where are we going ?"

BIXIOU. "There, daddy, let us not trip ourselves up with words. Listen, and we shall come to an understanding in the end. Look here, we will establish an axiom, which I bequeath to the office—The functionary begins where the employé ends, and the functionary leaves off where the statesman begins. There are very few statesmen, however, among prefects. So the prefect would seem to be a kind of neuter among superior orders of being ; he is half-way between the statesman and the employé, much as the tide-waiter is not exactly a soldier or a civilian, but something of both. Let us continue to unravel these lofty questions." (*Poiret grows red in the face*). "Can we not state the matter in a theorem worthy of La Rochefoucauld ? When salaries reach the limit line of twenty thousand francs, the employé ceases. Hence we may logically deduce the first corollary—The statesman reveals himself in the sphere of high salaries. Likewise this second and no less important corollary—It is possible for a director-general to be a statesman. Perhaps deputies mean something of this kind when they think within themselves that 'it is a fine thing to be a director-general.' Still, in the interests of the French language and the Academy——"

POIRET (*completely fascinated by Bixiou's fixity of gaze*). "The French language !—the Academy !——"

BIXIOU (*twisting off a second button, and seizing upon the one above it*). "Yes, in the interests of our noble language, your attention must be called to the fact that if a chief clerk, strictly speaking, may still be an employé, a head of the division is of necessity a bureaucrat. These gentlemen"—(*turning to the clerks, and holding up Poiret's third button for their inspection*)—"these gentlemen will appreciate all the delicacy of that subtle shade of distinction. And so, Papa Poiret, the employé ends absolutely at the head of a division."

So here is the question settled once for all—there is no more doubt about it; the employé, who might seem to be indefinable, is defined.”

POIRET. “Beyond a doubt, as it seems to me.”

BIXIOU. “And yet, be so far my friend as to solve me this problem: A judge is permanently appointed, consequently, according to your subtle distinction, he cannot be a functionary; and as his salary and the amount of work do not correspond, ought he to be included among employés?”

POIRET (*gazing at the ceiling*). “Monsieur, I cannot follow you now——”

BIXIOU (*nipping off a fourth button*). “I wanted to show you, monsieur, in the first place, that nothing is simple; but more particularly—and what I am about to remark is meant for the benefit of philosophists (if you will permit me to twist a saying attributed to Louis XVIII.)—I wish to point out that, side by side with the need of a definition, lies the peril of getting mixed.”

POIRET (*wiping his forehead*). “I beg your pardon, monsieur, I feel queasy” (*tries to button his overcoat*). “Oh! you have cut off all my buttons!”

BIXIOU. “Well, *now* do you understand?”

POIRET (*vexed*). “Yes, sir. Yes. I understand that you meant to play me a very nasty trick by cutting off my buttons while I was not looking.”

BIXIOU (*solemnly*). “Old man, you err. I was trying to engrave upon your mind as lively an image of the Government as is possible” (*all eyes are turned on Bixiou. Poiret, in his amazement, looks round at the others with vague uneasiness*). “That is how I kept my word. I took the parabolic method known to savages. (Now *listen!*) While the ministers are at the Chambers, starting discussions just about as profitable and conclusive as ours, the Administration is cutting off the taxpayers’ buttons.”

OMNES. “Bravo, Bixiou!”

POIRET (*as he begins to comprehend*). "I do not grudge my buttons now."

BIXIOU. "And I shall do as Minard does. I do not care to sign receipts for such trifling sums any longer; I deprive the department of my coöperation" (*goes out amid general laughter*).

Meanwhile another and more instructive scene was taking place in the minister's reception-room; more instructive, be it said, because it may give some idea of the way in which great ideas come to nothing in lofty regions, and how the inhabitants thereof find consolation in misfortune. At this particular moment des Lupeaulx was introducing M. Baudoyer, the new director. Two or three Ministerialist deputies were present beside M. Clergeot, to whom his excellency gave assurance of an honorable retiring pension. After various commonplace remarks, the event of the day came up in conversation.

A DEPUTY. "So Rabourdin has gone for good?"

DES LUPEAULX. "He has sent in his resignation."

CLERGEOT. "He wanted to reform the civil service, they said."

THE MINISTER (*looking at the deputies*). "Perhaps the salaries are not proportionate to the services required."

DE LA BRIÈRE. "According to Monsieur Rabourdin, a hundred men, with salaries of twelve thousand francs apiece, will do the same work better and more expeditiously than a thousand at twelve hundred francs."

CLERGEOT. "Perhaps he is right."

THE MINISTER. "There is no help for it! The machine is made that way; the whole thing would have to be taken to pieces and reconstructed; and who would have the courage to do that in front of the tribune and under the fire of stupid declamation from the Opposition or terrific articles in the press? Still, some day or other there will be a disastrous

hitch somewhere between the Government and the Administration."

THE DEPUTY. "What will happen?"

THE MINISTER. "Some minister will see a good thing to be done, and will be unable to do it. You will have created interminable delays between legislation and carrying the law into effect. You may make it impossible to steal a five-franc piece, but you cannot prevent collusion to gain private ends. Some things will never be done until clandestine stipulations have been made, and it is very difficult to detect such things. And, then, every man on the staff, from the chief down to the lowest clerk, will soon have his own opinion on this matter and that; they will no longer be hands directed by a brain, they will not carry out the intentions of the Government. The Opposition is gradually giving them a right to speak and vote against the Government, and to condemn it."

BAUDOYER (*in a low voice, but not so low as to be inaudible*). "His excellency is sublime!"

DES LUPEAULX. "Bureaucracy certainly has its bad side; it is slow and insolent, I think; it hampers the action of the department overmuch; it snuffs out many a project; it stops progress; but, still, the French administration is wonderfully useful——"

BAUDOYER. "Certainly."

DES LUPEAULX. "— if only as a support to the trade in stationery and stamps. And if, like many excellent housewives, the civil service is apt to be a little bit fussy, she can give an account of her expenditure at any moment. Where is the clever man in business that would not be only too glad to drop five per cent. on his turnover if some insurance agent would undertake to guarantee him against 'leakage?'"

THE DEPUTY (*a manufacturer*). "Manufacturers on both sides of the Atlantic would be delighted to make a bargain with the imp known as 'leakage' on such terms as those."

DES LUPEAULX. "Well, statistics may be the weakness of

the modern statesman ; he is apt to take figures for calculation, but we must use figures to make calculations ; therefore, let us calculate. If a society is based on money and self-interest, it takes its stand on figures, and society has been thus based since the Charter* was drawn up ; so I think, at least. And, then, there is nothing like a column of figures for carrying conviction to the ‘intelligent masses.’ Everything, in fact, so say our statesmen of the Left, can be resolved into figures. So to figures let us betake ourselves” (*the minister takes one of the deputies aside and begins to talk in a low voice.*) “Here, in France, there are about forty thousand men in the employ of the Government ; not counting road-menders, crossing-sweepers, and cigarette-makers. Fifteen hundred francs is the average amount of a salary. Multiply fifteen hundred francs by forty thousand, and you get sixty millions. And before we go any further, a publicist might call the attention of China, Austria, Russia (where civil servants rob the government), and divers American republics to the fact that for this sum France obtains the fussiest, most fidgety, interfering, inquisitive, meddlesome, painstaking, categorical set of scribblers and hoarders of wastepaper, the veriest old wife among all known administrations. Not one sou can be paid or received in France but a written order must be made out, checked off by a counterfoil, produced again and again at every stage of the business, and duly receipted at the end. And afterward the demand and receipt must be filed, entered, posted, and checked by a set of men in spectacles. The official understrapper takes fright at the least sign of an informality, for he lives by such *minutie*. Well, plenty of countries would be satisfied with that ; but Napoleon went further. He, great organizer as he was, reëstablished supreme magistrates in one court, a unique court in the world. These

* The Charter here mentioned was the one granted by Louis XVIII. at the time of the Restoration ; it also embraced the Code-Napoleon, but slightly modified.

functionaries spent their days in checking off all the bills, pay-sheets, muster-rolls, deposit certificates, receipts, and statements of expenditure, and all the files and bundles of wastepaper which the staff first covered with writing. Those austere judges possessed a talent for *minutiæ*, a genius for investigation, and a lynx-eyed perspicacity in book-keeping, which reached such an extreme that they went through every column of additions in their quest of frauds. They were sublime martyrs of arithmetic; they would send back a statement of accounts to a superintendent of army stores because they had detected an error of two centimes made two years previously. So the French administration is the most incorruptible service that ever accumulated wastepaper on the surface of the globe; theft, as his excellency observed just now, is all but impossible in France, and the talk of malversation a figment of the imagination.

“Well, where is the objection? France draws an annual revenue of twelve hundred millions, and she spends it; that is all. Twelve hundred millions come into her cash-box, and twelve hundred millions go out. She actually handles two milliards four hundred millions, and only pays two and a half per cent. to guarantee herself against leakage. Our political kitchen account only amounts to sixty millions; the gendarmerie, the law-courts, the prisons, and detectives cost us more and do nothing in return. And we find employment for a class of men who are fit for nothing else, you may be very sure. The waste, if waste there is, could not be better regulated; the Chambers are art and part in it; the public money is squandered in strictly legal fashion. The real leakage consists in ordering public works that are not needed, or not immediately needed; in altering soldiers’ uniforms; in ordering men-of-war without ascertaining whether timber is dear or not at the time; in unnecessary preparations for war; in paying the debts of a State without demanding repayment or security, and so forth, and so forth.”

BAUDOYER. "But the employé has nothing to do with leakage in high quarters. Mismanagement of national affairs concerns the statesman at the helm."

THE MINISTER (*his conversation being concluded*). "There is truth in what des Lupeaulx was saying just now; but" (*turning to Baudoyer*) "you must bear in mind that no one is looking at the matter from a statesman's point of view. It does not follow that because such and such a piece of expenditure was unwise or even useless that it was a case of mal-administration. In any case, it sets money circulating; and in France, of all countries, stagnation in trade is fatal, because the profoundly illogical habit of hoarding coin is so prevalent in the provinces, and so much gold is kept out of circulation as it is——"

THE DEPUTY (*who has been listening to des Lupeaulx.*) "But it seems to me that if your excellency is right, and if our witty friend here" (*taking des Lupeaulx by the arm*), "if our friend is not wrong, what are we to think?"

DES LUPEAULX (*after exchanging a glance with the minister*). "Something must be done, no doubt."

DE LA BRIÈRE (*diffidently*). "Then Monsieur Rabourdin is right?"

THE MINISTER. "I am going to see Rabourdin."

DES LUPEAULX. "The poor man was so misguided as to constitute himself supreme judge of the administration and the staff; he wants to have no more than three departments in the service."

THE MINISTER (*interrupting*). "Why, the man is evidently mad!"

THE DEPUTY. "How is he going to represent the different parties in the Chamber?"

BAUDOYER (*with an air that is meant to be knowing*). "Perhaps, at the same time Monsieur Rabourdin is changing the Constitution of this great country which we owe to the King-Legislator."

THE MINISTER (*growing thoughtful, takes de la Brière by the arm and steps aside*). "I should like to look at Rabourdin's scheme; and since you know about it——"

DE LA BRIÈRE (*in the cabinet*). "He has burnt it all. You allowed him to be dishonored; he has resigned. You must not suppose, my lord, that he entertained the preposterous idea, attributed to him by des Lupeaulx, of making any change in the admirable centralization of authority."

THE MINISTER (*to himself*). "I have made a mistake." (*A moment's pause*). "Bah! there will never be any scarcity of schemes of reform——"

DA LA BRIÈRE. "We have ideas in plenty; we lack the men that can carry them out."

Just then Lupeaulx, insinuating advocate of abuses, entered the cabinet.

"I am going down to address my constituents, your excellency."

"Wait!" returned his excellency, and, turning from his private secretary, he drew des Lupeaulx to a window. "Give up that arrondissement to me, my dear fellow; you shall have the title of count, and I will pay your debts. And—and if I am still in office after next election, I will find a way of putting you in with a batch of other personages to be made a peer of France."

"You are a man of honor; I accept."

And so it came to pass that Clément Chardin des Lupeaulx, whose father was ennobled by Louis XV., and bore *quarterly; of the first, argent, a wolf sable, ravissant, carrying a lamb, gules; of the second, purpur, three buckles argent, two and one; of the third, barry of six, gules and argent; of the fourth, gules, a caduceus winged and wreathed with serpents, vert; with four griffins' claws for supporters; and EN LUPUS IN HISTORIA* for a motto, managed to surmount his half-burlesque escutcheon with a count's coronet.

Toward the end of December, 1830, business brought Rabourdin back to his old office. The whole department had been shaken by changes from top to bottom ; and the revolution affected the messengers more than anybody else—they are never very fond of new faces. Knowing all the people in the place, Rabourdin had come early in the morning, and so chanced to overhear a conversation between Laurent's nephews, for Antoine had been pensioned.

"Well, how is your chief?"

"Don't speak of him ; I can make nothing of him. He rings to ask whether I have seen his pocket-handkerchief or his snuff-box. He does not keep people waiting, but has them shown in at once ; he has not the least dignity, in fact. I myself am obliged to say : 'Why, sir, the count, your predecessor, in the interests of authority, used to whittle his arm-chair with a penknife to make people believe that he worked.' In short, he makes a regular muddle of it ; the place does not know itself, to my thinking ; he is a very poor creature. How is yours?"

"Mine? Oh, I have trained him at last ; he knows where his paper and envelopes are kept, and where the firewood is, and all his things. My other used to swear ; this one is good-tempered. But he is not the big style of thing ; he has no order at his button-hole. I like a chief to have an order ; if he hasn't, they may take him for one of us, and that is so mortifying. He takes home office stationery, and asked me if I could go to his house to wait at evening parties."

"Ah ! what a Government, my dear fellow."

"Yes, a set of swindlers."

"I wish they may not nibble at our poor salaries."

"I am afraid they will. The Chambers keep a sharp lookout on you. They haggle over the firewood."

"Oh, well, if that is the style of them, it will not last long."

"We are in for it ! Somebody is listening."

“ Oh ! it is Monsieur Rabourdin that used to be. Ah ! sir, I knew you by your way of coming in. If you want anything here, there is nobody that will know the respect that is owing to you ; there is nobody of your time left now but us. Monsieur Colleville and Monsieur Baudoyer did not wear out the leather on their chairs after you went. Lord ! six months afterward they got appointments as receivers of taxes at Paris.”

PARIS, *July*, 1836.



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